

**Burn it Down!**  
**Anarchism, Activism, and the Vancouver Five,**  
**1967–1985**

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the experiences of five Canadian anarchists commonly known as the Vancouver Five, who came together in the early 1980s to destroy a BC Hydro power station in Qualicum Beach, bomb a Toronto factory that was building parts for American cruise missiles, and assist in the firebombing of pornography stores in Vancouver. It uses these events in order to analyze the development and transformation of anarchist activism between 1967 and 1985. Focusing closely on anarchist ideas, tactics, and political projects, it explores the resurgence of anarchism as a vibrant form of leftwing activism in the late twentieth century. In addressing the ideological basis and contested cultural meanings of armed struggle, it uncovers why and how the Vancouver Five transformed themselves into an underground, clandestine force. At the same time, it also situates these five activists into a broad social, political, and cultural context that extends beyond the boundaries of anarchist armed struggle, and beyond the local political environment of Vancouver.

The dissertation argues that the Vancouver Five were part of a wider phenomenon of armed struggle taking place across the United States and Europe in the wake of the 1960s. Drawing inspiration from an eclectic mixture of leftwing guerrilla movements, these activists sought to disrupt specific political projects, and expand the militant scope of social movement activism in Canada. While this global context shaped the political contours of the Vancouver Five, the dissertation also argues that their militancy reflected local patterns of anarchist activism, politics, and culture in Vancouver that originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, the dissertation illustrates that anarchism's development across the late twentieth century took place through conscious engagement with non-anarchist social movements. Therefore, it maintains that both the Vancouver Five and the broader anarchist resurgence developed in conjunction with a range of activist struggles against patriarchy, militarism, environmental degradation, capitalism, and imperialism that flourished after the 1960s. Based on oral interviews and archival research, is not only one of the first sustained histories of anarchism in post-war Canada, it also the first academic history to focus extensively on the Vancouver Five.

**Keywords:** Anarchism; environmentalism; feminism; anti-militarism; Vancouver; political history

*In memory of*  
*Brian Goble (1957–2014) and Lenore Herb (1947–2010)*

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## Introduction

On 31 May 1982, a bomb exploded on the outskirts of a small Vancouver Island town, destroying the partially completed Cheekeye-Dunsmuir hydroelectric power station. An anarchist group calling itself Direct Action claimed responsibility. Four months later, a truck packed with over 500 pounds of dynamite exploded outside an Ontario factory that was producing parts for the American government's controversial cruise missile program. Again, Direct Action claimed responsibility. In the fall of 1982, two members of Direct Action joined with seven other radical feminists in order to fire-bomb three pornography stores in the greater Vancouver area, an action they claimed under the name of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. In addition to these high-profile bombings, activists involved in these two groups also engaged in other illegal work, including the accumulation of dynamite and firearms, the creation of fraudulent identities, auto theft, and armed robbery. Such activity enabled them to create the underground infrastructure necessary for what they hoped to be an enduring urban guerrilla campaign against environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation, patriarchal violence, imperialism, and global capitalism. While this activity lasted for two years, stretching across 1980 and into the early months of 1983, the extensive surveillance powers of the Canadian state eventually identified and located five individuals in connection with these events: Ann Hansen, Gerry Hannah, Brent Taylor, Doug Stewart, and Juliet Belmas. In a dramatic sting operation in which police forces posed as a road construction crew, the state apprehended the activists as they headed into the mountains above Vancouver. In the aftermath of their arrest, Hansen, Hannah, Taylor, Stewart, and Belmas were labeled the Vancouver Five (the Five) by the press, charged and convicted with a multitude of criminal offences, and sentenced to jail terms ranging from six years to life in prison.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Because they were apprehended near the town of Squamish, the group is also often called the Squamish Five. Nevertheless, this dissertation will use the name Vancouver Five, or simply the Five, to refer to Hansen, Taylor, Stewart, Belmas, and Hannah as a group. More often, however, it uses the organizational names chosen by the activists themselves, namely, Direct Action and

This dissertation investigates the social, cultural, and political dynamics of these militant actions by situating the emergence of the Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade within a longer history of anarchist activism whose origins lay in the period between the late 1960s and the end of the 1970s. While Vancouver was a critical setting for this anarchist resurgence, the dissertation also places these radical movements into a broader political and geographical scope by demonstrating how this small group of Canadian activists were, in their own unique ways, part of a much wider pattern of armed political action that was taking place across the world. At the same time, it was not only Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade's support for armed action that linked them to these broader militant political movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, the dissertation argues that Direct Action was part of a much broader anarchist resurgence that was taking place both locally and globally. Furthermore, it also maintains that this resurgence was constructed through anarchism's relationship with other political movements. While no political project exists in a vacuum, the pluralism of anarchism's political ideology, and its re-emergence within a specific post-1960s landscape defined by new and emerging forms of social movement activism, produced a situation in which anarchist activism both shaped, and was shaped by, a broad array of left movements. In this sense, the dissertation is both a history of anarchist politics, culture, and activism, as well as a history of the counterculture, the New Left, environmentalism, the peace movement, and feminism. Based on oral interviews and archival research, it argues that both the Vancouver Five and the broader anarchist resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s were deeply entangled with these global patterns of political dissent and social movement organization that flourished in the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, the dissertation not only provides a close examination of anarchism between the 1960s and the 1980s, but it also offers new insights into the connections between local, national, and transnational configurations of radical activism. Overall, this work looks to

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the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. The most extensive exploration of the Direct Action collective and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade is Ann Hansen's autobiography, *Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerrilla* (Toronto/Oakland: Between the Lines/AK Press, 2001). Hansen's autobiography reflects a larger trend in the writing of anarchist history in the context of Vancouver. By and large, it has been activists who have been responsible for writing accounts of Direct Action and the broader anarchist movement. In addition to Hansen, anarchist activists Jim Campbell and Larry Gambone have both written short accounts of the group's actions. See Jim Campbell, *The Vancouver Five: Armed Struggle in Canada* (Montreal: Insoumise Anarchist Library, n.d.); Larry Gambone, *No Regrets: Counter-culture and Anarchism in Vancouver* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2015), 156–159. Direct Action is also referenced in Susan Tabata's excellent documentary on Vancouver punk, *Bloodied But Unbowed* (Vancouver: Tabata Productions/The Knowledge Network, 2011), DVD.

expand our understanding of how modern social movements were constructed through local experience and action, while also operating within a globalized nexus of political theory, culture, and organized resistance.

The history of Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade is well known within anarchist and activist communities, but there has been no substantial treatment of the topic by academic historians. While Allan Antliff's *Only A Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology* is an important collection of anarchist primary materials that includes information on the Five and remains one of the most broadly focused collections of Canadian anarchist activity between the second half of the 1970s and the opening years of the 2000s, it does not attempt to undertake an extensive historical analysis.<sup>2</sup> More often than not, when the group is mentioned at all within the scholarly literature, it is usually as an aside. For example, George Woodcock's widely cited history, *Anarchism*, only references the Vancouver Five in passing by maintaining that they symbolized the continuing relevance of anarchist politics in the closing decades of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> While Dany Lacombe's analysis of anti-pornography feminism gives a brief mention of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, it does not discuss the broader political origins of the group's formation, or its connections to anarchism.<sup>4</sup> A similar pattern exists in John Clearwater's history of the cruise missile debate. Clearwater details Direct Action's attack on Litton Systems, but the radical context behind the group is largely missing.<sup>5</sup> Writing in the journal *Police Practice and Research*, Stéphane Leman-Langlois and Jean-Paul Brodeur also briefly mention the actions of the Direct Action collective, but their account provides no background on the group or their specific anarchist orientation. Furthermore, the authors' incorrectly attribute the Red Hot Video actions to Direct Action, rather than to the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. In doing so, they fail to place these specific acts of violence into the political and social contexts that are fundamental in explaining their origins, structures,

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<sup>2</sup> Allan Antliff ed., *Only A Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), 414.

<sup>4</sup> Dany Lacombe, *Blue Politics: Pornography and the Law in the Age of Feminism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 78–79.

<sup>5</sup> John Clearwater, *Just Dummies: Cruise Missile Testing in Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 99–106.

meanings, and objectives.<sup>6</sup> Reflecting a more nuanced academic approach, Gordon Hak has written the most thorough academic treatment of Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. Although Hak's account is also brief, it effectively locates this activism within an anarchist context, as well as carefully notes that the collective did not seek to target human beings with its bombings. Nevertheless, Hak overemphasises the distinctiveness of their militancy, arguing that their turn to illegality placed them "beyond the pale" of other political movements. Certainly, these types of activist armed actions were rare. Nevertheless, this dissertation demonstrates that the Vancouver Five's turn to armed struggle, while distinct in some ways, also had strong parallels within the broader New Left, environmental, feminist, and anti-nuclear movements of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the dissertation aims to make sense of Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade by noting the ways in which they both intersected with, and diverged from, the broader radical left.

If the Vancouver Five remain as either absent or marginal figures within the scholarly treatment of radical political movements in Canada, the same is true for anarchism in general. Indeed, historians have spoken very little about anarchism in Canada during the post-war period—an unfortunate historiographical gap given that anarchist activism, politics, and culture played a critical role in the expansion and negotiation of both the New Left and the mounting wave of social movements that emerged in its wake. Nevertheless, there are a number of exceptions to this historiographical pattern. Bryan Palmer, for example, has noted how the Montreal periodical *Our Generation* contributed an important anarchist sensibility to the emerging radicalism of Canada's 1960s.<sup>8</sup> In the context of British Columbia, Frank Zelko has briefly illustrated how anarchist ideas helped to shape the province's emerging environmental movements of the late 1960s and 1970s, while Michael Boudreau has made similar observations about anarchism's role in Vancouver's infamous 1971 Gastown Riot.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stéphane Leman-Langlois and Jean-Paul Brodeur, "Terrorism Old and New: Counterterrorism in Canada," *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2005), 128.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Hak, *The Left In British Columbia: A History of Struggle* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2013), 157–159.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Decade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 255.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 142/143 (Summer/Autumn 2004): 9; Michael Boudreau, "The Struggle for a Different World': The 1971 Gastown Riot in Vancouver," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the*

Moving beyond these marginal references to anarchism, one of the most extensive considerations of the topic has been Matthew Adams and Allan Antliff's analyses of the anarchist scholar George Woodcock and his contribution to the political and cultural life of Canada from the 1940s to the 1980s.<sup>10</sup>

There is a slightly more extensive body of scholarship on anarchism in Canada in the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Here, Mark Leier's work on the Industrial Workers of the World, as well as his study of the radical activist-turned-spy, Robert Gosden, has demonstrated how anarchist politics played an important role in the shaping of early twentieth century labour history in western Canada.<sup>11</sup> Taking on a more explicitly transnational focus, Mikhail Bjorge has considered how anarchists, syndicalists, and communists in Canada participated in the global movement to support the imprisoned Italian-American anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti during the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> Anarchism's transnationalism has also been explored in Travis Tomchuk's doctoral dissertation on Italian anarchist networks in Southern Ontario and the eastern United States, a study that stretches from 1915 to 1940.<sup>13</sup> This temporal focus on the late nineteenth and twentieth century is mirrored in the historical writing on anarchist movements outside of Canada. Therefore, there is an emerging body of historical work that considers the transformation of anarchist politics and culture in the years after the

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*Sixties*, ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 122 and 131.

<sup>10</sup> Allan Antliff and Matthew S. Adams, "George Woodcock's Transatlantic Anarchism," *Anarchist Studies* 23, no. 1 (2015), 6–14; Matthew S. Adams, "Memory, History, and Homesteading: George Woodcock, Herbert Read, and Intellectual Networks," *Anarchist Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 2015): 86–104. See also, Eryk Martin, "The Blurred Boundaries of Anarchism and Punk in Vancouver, 1970–1983," *Labour/Le Travail* 75 (Spring 2015), 9–41. In an unpublished conference paper, Abby Rolston has written a fascinating and much needed exploration of anarchism's engagement with prison abolition movements in British Columbia. See Abby Rolston, "A Machine for Grinding Up Lives Slowly': Prisoners, Anarchists, and Prison Abolition in 1970s British Columbia," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Start Books, 1990); *Rebel Life: The Life and Times of Robert Gosden, Revolutionary, Mystic, Labour Spy* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Mikhail Bjorge, "'They Shall Not Die!': Anarchists, Syndicalists, Communists, and the Sacco and Vanzetti Solidarity Campaign in Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* 75 (2015): 44–73.

<sup>13</sup> Travis Tomchuk, "Transnational Radicals: Italian Anarchist Networks in Southern Ontario and the Northeastern United States, 1915–1940," (PhD diss., Queens University, 2010).

Second World War.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the vast majority of the historical work on anarchism remains clustered between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For a sampling of the emerging historiography, see Andrew Cornell, "A New Anarchism Emerges, 1940–1954," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 5, no. 1 (2011): 105–131; Andrew Cornell, *Oppose and Propose: Lessons from Movement for a New Society* (Oakland: AK Press; Washington, D.C: Institute for Anarchist Studies, 2011); Matt Adams, "Art, Education, and Revolution: Herbert Read and the Reorientation of British Anarchism," *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 5 (2013): 707–728; Lucien van der Walt and Stephen J. Hirsch, "Final Reflections: The Vicissitudes of Anarchist and Syndicalist Trajectories, 1940 to the Present," in *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution*, ed. Lucien van der Walt and Stephen J. Hirsch (Boston: Brill, 2010); Michael Schmidt, *The Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012). Although anarchism is not its primary point of focus, the topic does receive some important attention in Daniel Burton-Rose's *Guerrilla USA: The George Jackson Brigade and the Anti-capitalist Underground of the 1970s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). For scholarship that lies outside of the discipline of history, yet still contributes to a historical understanding of the anarchist past since the mid-20th century, see David Graeber, "The Rebirth of Anarchism in North America, 1957–2007," *Historica Actual Online* 21 (2010): 123–131; Richard Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press; Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005); Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); and Allan Antliff, *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007). In addition to this recent literature, established and well-cited works by George Woodcock and Peter Marshall have also provided critical explorations of anarchism since the 1960s, in addition to focusing on the tradition's earlier activity and development. See George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004); and Peter H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> For a sampling of the literature written on this earlier period, see Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009); and David Berry and Constance Bantman ed., *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour, and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National, and the Transnational* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010). See also Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books; St. Martin's Press, 2006); and Davide Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's Experiments with Revolution, 1889–1900* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Much of the literature has focused on anarchism's transnational character. See Constance Bantman, *The French Anarchists in London, 1880–1914: Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalization* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013); Kirwin Shaffer, *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005); Tom Goynes, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880–1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); and Kenyon Zimmer, "Premature Anti-Communists?: American Anarchism, the Russian Revolution, and Left-Wing Libertarian Anti-Communism, 1917–1939," *Labor* 6, no. 2 (2009): 45–71. For studies on anarchism's relationship to anti-colonialist politics and movements, see Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005). See also, Lucien van der Walt and Steven Hirsch, ed., *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940*. For a discussion on anarchism's relationship to education, see Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Matthew Adams, "Kropotkin: Evolution, Revolutionary Change and the End of History," *Anarchist Studies* 19, no. 1 (2011): 56–81. For a wide reaching discussion on anarchism and artistic expression, see Allan Antliff,

This dissertation provides a significant contribution to the emerging literature on anarchist history in the post-war period by addressing the silences surrounding the Vancouver Five and the development of anarchist politics, culture, and activism in Canada in the years after the 1960s. It also argues that these patterns of anarchist politics and culture are significant in ways that extend beyond the disciplinary borders of anarchist studies and anarchist history. To do so, it suggests that a focus on anarchist activism can provide historians with new insights into the legacy of the long sixties. Historians have used the idea of a long sixties to refer to broad patterns of social, political, and cultural change that retain connections to the passage of time between 1960 and 1969, yet also extend beyond those years in various ways. An early articulation of this expanded periodization came from Fredrick Jameson, who sketched out a temporal framework that began in the late 1950s with decolonization and anti-imperialist movements in Africa and Latin America, and ended with the global economic crisis of the mid-1970s.<sup>16</sup> This dissertation takes a similar approach in defining the long sixties not as a single decade, but rather as a flexible temporal field that runs from the middle years of the 1950s until the middle years of the 1970s, coalescing, as Lara Campbell and Dominique Clément have recently suggested, around ideas rooted in a broad questioning of authority, modernity, nationhood, and a focus on the “permeability of national borders.”<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the dissertation also refers to the “1960s” when a narrower framing of time is necessary. In this sense, the sixties and the 1960s are understood as complementary rather than conflicting concepts.

Although the literature on social movements, protest, and activism in the context of the long sixties is vast, we still know comparatively little about anarchism’s

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*Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s,” *Social Text* 9, no. 10 (1984): 178–209.

<sup>17</sup> Lara Campbell and Dominique Clément, “Introduction: Towards a History of the Sixties,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada in the Sixties*, 6–7. For an overview of the wide range of approaches to the periodization of the sixties, see M. J. Heale, “The Sixties as History: A Review of the Political Historiography,” *Reviews in American History* 33 (2005): 133–152. For some of the more recent arguments for a long sixties, see Jeremy Varon, Michael S. Foley, and John McMillian, “Time is an Ocean: the Past and Future of the Sixties,” *The Sixties* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1–7; and Arthur Marwick, “The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties: Voices of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation,” *The International History Review* 27, no. 4 (December 2005): 780–806.

contributions to the political, social, and cultural contours of this period and beyond.<sup>18</sup> As this dissertation demonstrates, not only did anarchism play an important role in the polymorphous development of both the New Left and the counterculture across the long sixties, but anarchist politics, culture, and activism also connected the long sixties with the social movements and activist projects of the 1970s and 1980s. In this sense, the dissertation's emphasis on anarchist activism can provide historians with a new perspective on this shifting political and cultural landscape of the postwar era, in the long sixties and its legacies.

Another defining feature of the literature on radical politics both during and after long sixties has been a tendency for historians to approach their subjects through "transnational" frameworks. Such a tendency is not at all confined to a study of radical movements, but rather represents a much larger historiographical pattern that seeks to situate historical analysis into a spatial framework that is capable of moving beyond the confines of a given nation-state. As scholars often note, the turn towards an explicit reference to "transnationalism" brings with it a number of definitional and analytical problems. For example, Chris Bayly has argued that the differences between transnational, global, and world history are often unclear, while also suggesting that the category of "transnational" can be a restrictive tool for historians that deal with political units such as city-states and empires, or time periods that predate the mid-nineteenth century popularization of nation-states.<sup>19</sup> Disagreeing with Bayly's assessment over the term's limitations, Patricia Seed maintains that the most important contribution of using a transnational framework has been its ability to emphasize the "movement" and "transition" of people across space.<sup>20</sup> Expanding on these aspects, Isabel Hofmeyr has

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<sup>18</sup> For example, see Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey, ed., *Debating Dissent: Canada in the Sixties*; Karen Dubinsky, Catherine Krull, Susan Lord, Sean Mills, and Scott Rutherford, ed., *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2009); M. Athena Palaeologu, ed., *The Sixties in Canada: A Turbulent and Creative Decade* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2009). Bryan Palmer's recent work on the 1960s in Canada and Barbara Epstein's classic text on direct action movements in the United States provide a number of examples of anarchism's place within the shifting political environments of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. See Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*; and Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1442.

<sup>20</sup> Bayly, Beckert, Connelly, Hofmeyr, Kozol, and Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," 1442-1443.



suggested that the central utility of transnational history is its ability to bring into close scrutiny “movements, flows, and circulation.” In this way, Hofmeyer maintains that the “claim of transnational methods is not simply that historical processes are made in different places but that they are constructed in the movement between places, sites, and regions.”<sup>21</sup>

This dissertation draws on the methodological implications of the transnational turn raised by historians such as Seed and Hofmeyer. In doing so, it argues that anarchist resurgence that flourished in places such as Vancouver in the wake of the long sixties was a profoundly transnational process that involved the movement and circulation of people, ideas, and material items. In doing so, it not only demonstrates that the development of anarchist projects in Canada were part of a broader pattern of anarchist militancy in other parts of the world, but also suggests that the local and the global were linked through direct networks of material exchange, and political and cultural dialogue. At the same time, it also contends that these transnational processes were filtered and shaped through local, regional, or national environments. In this sense, the dissertation uses a multiplicity of spatial settings depending on the context. While Vancouver provides the most consistent political environment from which to explain and analyze Direct Action and the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade, the broader anarchist resurgence, and its relationships with the surrounding social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, the dissertation continually reaches beyond the city’s boundaries in ways that are regional, national, and transnational. In doing so, it demonstrates how local activist projects shaped, and were shaped by, an eclectic pattern political movement and exchange; processes that circulated through equally diverse spatial environments.

In addition to drawing on the methodological influences of long sixties and the transnational turn, this dissertation is motivated by a desire to merge the broad methodological objectives of political, social, and cultural history. From political history, it takes the desire to explore the explicit ideological, intellectual, and philosophical ideas that shaped radical politics in Canada both during and after the long sixties. Nevertheless, in other ways, the contours of this political focus are decidedly different from the traditional subjects of political history. In explaining the origins and development of anarchism, as

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<sup>21</sup> Bayly, Beckert, Connelly, Hofmeyer, Kozol, and Seed, “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,” 1444.

well as its relationship with other radical social movements, it moves outside the institutional world of political parties, state bureaucracies, and social elites, and into a radical realm of popular protests, the daily lives of local community organizers, transnational activist networks, and the revolutionary underground. In doing so, it is part of a growing body of historical writing that takes up the topic of social movements and community based activist projects that flourished during and after the long sixties.<sup>22</sup> While these alternative political settings, structures, and actors may be less well known than their parliamentary and partisan equivalents, this dissertation is motivated social history's empathy for social actors who lay outside the official and proscribed institutions of political power. In this sense, it takes inspiration from a previous generation of scholars such as E. P. Thompson, Christopher Hill, and other social historians who have looked to the structures and experiences of everyday people's lives in order to expose the contours of radical political ideas and movements.<sup>23</sup> Finally, it takes from cultural history a study of activist cultural expression, as well as a desire to uncover the contested and symbolic meanings of radical ideas, practices, and identities.<sup>24</sup> In doing so, it echoes what Peter Burke has described as the search for "political culture," in which historians seek to uncover the "political attitudes or assumptions of different groups of people, and the ways in which these attitudes are installed."<sup>25</sup>

From these historiographical influences—the topical and temporal gaps in anarchist history, a focus on the transnational long sixties and its legacies, and the merger of political, social, and cultural history—the dissertation seeks to uncover the fundamental origins, motivations, objectives, and tactics of anarchist activism in Vancouver between the

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<sup>22</sup> For examples, see Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006); Daniel Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*; Dubinsky, Krull, Lord, Mills, and Rutherford, ed., *New World Coming*; Palaeologu, ed., *The Sixties in Canada*; Dan Berger, ed., *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Here, I am particularly influenced by Thompson's account of Luddism and Hill's analysis of the True Levelers. See E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); and Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1985).

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Robert Darton, *The Devil is in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Carlo Guinzberg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004): 103–106.

late 1960s and the early 1980s. Because of the existing gaps in the literature around anarchist politics in Canada in the postwar years, it begins the process of answering fundamental questions such as: why and how did anarchism re-emerge in the context of the long sixties?; how did anarchism change over time?; and what was anarchism's relationship with other popular forms of left-wing activity?

In addressing these issues of political context, the dissertation also aims to explain how and why Vancouver's anarchist community became involved in two dramatically different types of political action: one the one hand, above-ground forms of community organizing in which anarchists worked closely with the emerging social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, and on the other hand, forms of clandestine organization and armed struggle. In this context, it not only seeks to explain why anarchist activists played a crucial role in the development of environmentalist, anti-nuclear, and feminist political projects, but also how they did so. Here, the dissertation explores the intellectual and cultural motivations that gave rise to activist tactics, both legal and illegal. In terms of the latter, it uncovers the reasons behind the Vancouver Five's decisions to go into the underground. Furthermore, it exposes the contours of these guerrilla politics, and how these young activists acquired the revolutionary skills necessary to construct an underground movement committed to repeated acts of sabotage. Finally, the dissertation asks how these forms of militant anarchist action impacted, intersected, and conflicted with the non-anarchist social movements that were directly involved in the political environment in which the anarchist resurgence operated. In this sense, this study is not only about the origins and development of anarchist activism, but also asks how these forms of activism developed in relationship with other non-anarchist forms of radical political action and community organizing.

In addressing these questions, the dissertation draws on a diverse and rich collection of sources. In the early stages of this project, I assumed that the vast majority of my sources would be broken down into two general categories: first, mainstream and activist newspapers; and second, oral history. When it came to discussing the actions Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, newspaper sources were predictably fruitful, since the bombings of BC Hydro, Litton Systems, and Red Hot Video provoked extensive coverage by the press. However, mainstream papers were generally useless for uncovering the development and activity of less spectacular forms of anarchist activism. To fill in these silences, I turned to Vancouver's anarchist press. The internationally

focused journal *Open Road*, which ran between 1976 and 1990, provided me with a critical conduit that linked local anarchists into a transnational web of activity, news, analysis, and published letters. Yet, as an internationally focused journal, *Open Road* often said little about the local political environment of British Columbia. Filling this gap was the anarchist newsletter *British Columbia's Blackout*, which provided a consistent biweekly perspective on local news and events, both in Vancouver and across the province during the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to the local anarchist press, the dissertation also draws on anarchist publications from the United States and Britain, particularly in its exploration of the hybridization of anarchism and feminism. It also draws extensively from non-anarchist activist periodicals produced by environmental, anti-nuclear, and feminist activists, publications that not only provide coverage of anarchist activity, but also provide contrasting perspectives on similar subjects found in the anarchist press.

However, of all the sources available to me, the ones I looked forward to most were the stories told by activists. I assumed that talking to the participants who were responsible for the activism I wanted to engage with would be the best way of uncovering the daily details of activist life. These specific personal perspectives seemed critical in explaining how and why activists turned to militant forms of political practice, as well as opening up opportunities for uncovering what this activism meant to different activists. Because of the relatively recent nature of the topic, and my ability to relocate to the greater Vancouver area, I hoped that I would be able to find and talk to those activists who had participated in either the anarchist resurgence itself, or in the politically eclectic struggles against BC Hydro, Litton Systems, and Red Hot Video. I also hoped that I could, in some way, make connections with activists in Toronto who had participated in the local struggles against Litton Systems, or who had experienced the police raids that swept across many radical communities in the wake of the Litton bombing. Through the generous and indispensable work of contacts in Vancouver, I was able to formally interview twenty-two different activists, many of whom I talked to on multiple occasions. This included three members of the Vancouver Five: Ann Hansen, Brent Taylor, and Juliet Belmas. Belmas subsequently decided that she no longer wanted to participate in the project. While intermediaries contacted Hannah and Stewart on my behalf, they declined to participate in the study. Through a research agreement, all interviewees were able to place specific requirements on how their information was used, and how they wanted to be identified.

Interviewees also had the option of reviewing how I used their information. This included the ability to make alterations or changes in their interviews after the fact.<sup>26</sup>

The activists that I spoke to not only welcomed me into their homes, but also into the intimate depths of their lives, both past and present. It was in the context of spending time with them that I began to realize that there was much more textual and material evidence for this dissertation than I had originally assumed. Many people I talked to either came to their interview with primary sources in tow—such as newspapers, posters, leaflets, audio recordings, position papers, buttons, t-shirts, and film and video recordings—or asked me if I wanted to borrow some of those items from them. As a result, the personal connections that were first initiated around one type of historical evidence—oral history—soon led to an engagement with a rich and diverse number of private activist collections and personal archives.

The surprise of experiencing this material evidence was repeated in the more formal setting of institutional archives and collections. The Environment and Land Use Committee records at the BC Archives provided a large body of state perspectives on environmental issues central to the dissertation, as well as activist materials, including private correspondence and newsletters. The archives and special collections of Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia were also rich sources of activist materials, including the personal papers of prolific activists and organizations such as Lille d'Easum, Ken Lester, and the Women's Bookstore collections. In addition to these holdings, the University of Victoria's Anarchist Archive provided an incredibly rich body of material. Initiated by Allan Antliff, it not only includes a large number of anarchist periodicals, but also holds the personal papers of Ann Hansen. The vast amount of material in this collection was collected and created in order to prepare for her and her colleagues' legal defence. As the conclusion to this dissertation will demonstrate, the Vancouver Five hoped to be able to use a wide body of evidence to construct a "political trial" one that would be able to use their time in court as a forum for denouncing BC Hydro, Litton Systems, and Red Hot Video. While the defendants gathered their own evidence, so too did the state, much of which had to be disclosed to the defendants. In this sense, this

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<sup>26</sup> Interviewees were given the opportunity to remain anonymous or to be referred to through pseudonyms. In instances where pseudonyms are used, the names are marked with a \*.

archival holding is a product of both activist activity as well as the surveillance work of the state's security services.

From this body of evidence, the dissertation is constructed around six chapters that together provide a history of anarchism, activism, and the Vancouver Five set in the period between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Chapter 1, "Northern Lunatics: Anarchism and the Making of a Countercultural New Left in Vancouver, 1967-1972," explores the creation and activity of the Northern Lunatic Fringe of the Youth International Party (Yippie). The chapter argues that Yippie provided a critical space for the growth of anarchist politics and culture. It maintains that Vancouver Yippies contributed to a broader reshaping of left-wing activism in the community that had lasting impacts on the city's radical landscape. In doing so, the chapter initiates a process of political comparison that unfolds in a range of different ways throughout the dissertation. As the first instance of this process, it demonstrates that the growth of anarchism was inseparable from other radical traditions such as Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. In terms of its historiographical contributions, it works to unsettle strict binaries such as Old Left versus New Left, and places emerging instances of anarchist politics and culture within the overlapping conceptual frameworks of the long sixties and transnationalism.

In Chapter 2, "Crazy Dreams: The Resurgence of Anarchist Activism and the Recreation of Social Revolution in the 1970s," the dissertation explores how early forms of anarchist politics expanded into a dynamic resurgence of anarchist activism in Vancouver during the mid-to-late 1970s. The chapter investigates the creation of early anarchist reading groups, affinity groups, periodicals, and cultural initiatives. It argues that these anarchist projects expanded during the 1970s in Vancouver as a way of reshaping the political and cultural aspirations of the long sixties in ways that were compatible with the new political environment of the 1970s. It also suggests that this resurgence was inseparable from the development of other influential political and cultural movements, including feminism, environmentalism, prison abolition, and punk rock. In focusing on the legacies of the long sixties, it continues the argument that Vancouver's anarchist resurgence both contributed to, and reflected, broader transnational transformations in the scope and organization of radical social movement activism during the 1970s.

Where the first two chapters of the dissertation sketch out the general origins and development of Vancouver's anarchist resurgence, Chapter 3, "Learning to be Guerrillas: Anarchism, Armed Struggle, and the Transnational Origins of the Direct Action Collective," explores the development of illegal and clandestine forms of organizing, both in the city and beyond. To do so, the chapter provides a biographical narrative of Brent Taylor and Ann Hansen's early political experiences by following them as they moved through a number of radical communities in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe. It argues that this transnational movement, which bridged the local with the global, provided the inspiration for the Direct Action collective and its specific approach to armed political action. In addition, it also focuses on how the collective constructed the infrastructure needed to conduct and maintain such radical activities. The chapter suggests that the relatively more mundane forms of illegal activity such as shoplifting, armed robbery, and fraud be understood as a crucial part of the underground political process. Furthermore, it reveals that the armed actions of Direct Action, while distinct in some ways, were also part of a larger pattern of militant action taking place in many parts of the world during the late twentieth century. As a result, it maintains that one cannot make sense of Direct Action without situating the collective's activity into a broader temporal and ideological environment that bridged the 1960s with the 1980s.

The last three chapters in the dissertation consider the actions for which Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade are most well known: the bombings of Cheekeye-Dunsmuir, Litton Systems, and Red Hot Video. These chapters argue that the work of Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade cannot be understood without reference to the actions of the organizations they attacked or the activist work of other opposition movements. Therefore, these chapters focus extensively on non-anarchist subjects, ideas, and movements as a means of situating the Vancouver Five and the anarchist resurgence into a longer and wider history of environmental, anti-nuclear, and feminist activism in the late twentieth century. This approach explains why Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade acted as they did, while also uncovering how anarchist approaches to revolutionary struggle complemented, conflicted, and intersected with the work of other activist projects. As a result, these chapters demonstrate that struggles against BC Hydro, Litton Systems, and Red Hot Video were never only anarchist causes, but rather reflect three critical sites for exploring a diverse array of social movement projects at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.

As the first example of this process, Chapter 4, “Conflicting Currents: Anarchism, Environmentalism, and the Politics of Hydroelectric Power in British Columbia, 1970–1982,” argues that Direct Action’s attack against the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line was part of a wider configuration of political dissent directed at the provincial energy utility during the 1970s and 1980s. It maintains that BC Hydro’s approach to energy planning in the province was pivotal in generating new activist organizations, such as the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance and the Lasqueti Island Steering Committee. These activists contributed to a systemic critique of the state’s industrial vision for the province. The chapter demonstrates that anarchists from Vancouver worked both with and against these new environmental movements in ways that highlighted disparate debates over the meaning and use of direct action, sabotage, and non-violent civil disobedience. It argues that Direct Action’s attack on BC Hydro was not only the product of this longer campaign against energy megaprojects, but that the bombing also reflected a distinct anarchist critique of industrial modernism that was both transnational in its imagination and intersectional in its analysis. In doing so, the chapter provides a window into the first guerrilla action of the Direct Action collective, and initiates new conversations over the political, cultural, and tactical contours of environmentalism in the province during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Chapter 5, “‘Refuse the Cruise’: Anarchism and the Unexpected Politics of Anti-nuclear Activism in Canada,” considers the controversial outcomes of Direct Action’s bombing of the Litton Systems plant on the outskirts of Toronto in 1982. It argues that the bombing did not inspire further acts of industrial sabotage as Direct Action had hoped, nor did it lead to the subversion of popular political protest as advocates of non-violent civil disobedience had feared. Instead, the chapter highlights the ambiguous and unexpected political climate that developed around the bombing. Situating Direct Action’s call for industrial sabotage into a wider anarchist debate over political violence and guerrilla organization, it demonstrates that not all anarchists were of similar mind when it came to the question of armed action. The same was true for non-anarchist peace activists. Rather than demonstrating a clear divide between anarchist violence and non-anarchist non-violence, the chapter argues that the bombing of Litton Systems highlights how anarchism, the peace movement, armed action, and non-violence were entangled in unexpected ways. At the same time, it also situates the rekindling of this anti-nuclear activism in Canada, both anarchist and non-anarchist, into a longer history



of anti-militarism that stretches from the immediate postwar years through to the early 1980s.

The final chapter in the dissertation, Chapter 6, “Resisting Reel Violence: Anarchism, Feminism, and the Struggle Against Pornography, 1974–1983,” argues that the actions of the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade and its reception by BC’s wider feminist movement, were shaped by a longer history of opposition to sexism in the media and violence against women. In explaining these connections across time, the chapter demonstrates that specific struggles against the pornographic retailer Red Hot Video that erupted over the course of 1982 drew on the analysis and tactics of previous feminist networks and projects that stretched back to the early 1970s. Furthermore, it argues that both the actions of the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade and the longer history of opposition to sexism in the media and violence against women were shaped by the coming together of anarchism and feminism. In this way, it illustrates how and why the women of Direct Action worked with other feminists to create the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade, and reflects on the wider interactions between anarchist and feminist politics that took place across the 1970s and 1980s, both in Vancouver and elsewhere. These instances of political mixing reveal why and how feminist activists in BC were able to create popular instances of anti-pornography organizing, as well as why significant sections of the women’s movement refused to condemn the armed actions of the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade. As a result, the chapter explains the origins and outcomes of the Red Hot Video arsons through a broader history of feminism’s engagement with issues of sexism and patriarchal violence during the 1970s and 1980s, and its underexplored relationship with anarchism.

Tying these chapters together, the dissertation contends that anarchist activism, be it public or clandestine, has played a pivotal role in the development and transformation of radical politics inside and outside of Vancouver. It has done so by initiating specific forms of anarchist activity that has militantly contested the social, political, and cultural consequences of capitalist and state projects across the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. While the anarchist resurgence was built through the work of small groups of committed activists, the activity of Direct Action and the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade illustrate that such groups had a larger impact on the political environment than their small numbers might otherwise suggest. At the same time, anarchism’s ability to impact the contours of the postwar period was not confined to those who went underground.

Rather, as anarchism's development during and after the long sixties demonstrates, anarchist ideas, culture, and activity was inseparable from the expansion of a much wider array of social movements and radical activist projects. In this sense, the history of the anarchist resurgence is not simply the story of a "militant minority," but is simultaneously a history of the New Left and the counterculture, an account of modern environmentalism, a study in the transformation of anti-militarism, and a new exploration of Canadian feminism. As a result, the dissertation reveals how a focus on anarchist politics, culture, and activism can provide new insights into the development, organization, and significance of political dissent and activism at the end of the twentieth century in Vancouver and beyond.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Northern Lunatics: Anarchism, the New Left, and the Counterculture in Vancouver, 1967–1972**

The origin of Vancouver's anarchist resurgence lies in the political, social, and cultural developments of the long sixties. It was at this point that members of the city's student New Left and radical counterculture came together to produce new forms of social activism that nurtured a growing experimentation with anarchist politics, culture, and organization. As a path into this changing political landscape, this chapter focuses on the experiences of a number of radicals located within the Northern Lunatic Fringe of the Youth International Party (Yippie), an eclectic network of activists that operated in the city between 1970 and 1972. Yippie, along with other likeminded groups in the city, created the basis for new forms of political culture in Vancouver by merging the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and participatory democracy of the New Left with the cultural prerogatives of the counterculture. This was Vancouver's countercultural New Left, a form of activism that merged radical community organizing with spectacular forms of hip propaganda. While the countercultural New Left was politically diverse, Yippie activists filtered their political and cultural work along anarchic lines. Calling for new approaches to the organization and meaning of liberation and revolutionary struggle, Yippie articulated a political sensibility that drew direct links between a broad array of anarchist traditions, traditions that were rooted in a diverse spatial and temporal landscape. At the same time, the chapter situates the development of Vancouver Yippie into the context of the student New Left, arguing that experiences within the world of campus radicalism shaped new collectives such as Yippie, as well as provided an early exposure to anarchist ideas and culture. While much of this activist engagement with anarchist ideas and politics were initially limited, these early forms of activism provided the building blocks for a rigorous anarchist resurgence beginning in the middle decades of the 1970s. In doing so, these activists created forms of revolutionary socialism that operated outside of the confines of the Marxist-Leninist left, both in its old and new articulations.

As a result, this chapter contributes to an emerging historiography on social movement activism during the long sixties by emphasizing political and cultural traditions that have remained unexplored in the telling of the city's radical left history.

At the same time, the chapter also argues that the significance of these activists expands beyond their early flirtations with anarchism by pushing historians to consider how social movements operated within the context of the long sixties. It argues that the social, political, and cultural experiences of activists connected to both the student New Left and Yippie can help historians to rethink the definition and meaning of Old Left/New Left binaries as well as offer specific examples of how activists blurred the boundaries between what constituted political and cultural activity. The latter point is particularly relevant because it helps to situate Vancouver's emerging countercultural New Left into a broader continental context as well as uncover a major methodological basis upon which Vancouver's anarchist movement would operate well into the 1980s. In this sense, the intersection of anarchism, the New Left, and the counterculture pushed well beyond the borders of the city's physical limits and transcended the temporal boundaries of 1969. The chapter therefore provides further evidence to support the idea of a long sixties that was simultaneously local and transnational, reflecting a complex nexus in which people, movements, ideas, and material items circulated, interacted, and changed over time.

Before addressing the connections between anarchism and the long sixties, it is first necessary to address the definition and historiographical approach to the New Left and the counterculture. Closely linked to the emergence of the long sixties is a series of transformations in the development, organization, and meaning of left-wing activity. At the heart of these changes are discussions that note the blooming of a New Left. While the New Left is a highly amorphous concept, historians have emphasized a number of shared tendencies in order to link together the phenomena's different components. From this body of writing, the New Left is generally understood to have developed through a dual process in which struggles to transform social injustices were paired with a constant questioning of established forms of leftwing practice. In doing so, the New Left was inseparably connected to the idea of an Old Left. On the surface, this relationship was primarily oppositional. After decades of internal strife, government repression, and the increasingly visible nature of Soviet brutality, the influence of communist parties within

the left waned significantly.<sup>27</sup> If they demonstrated anything at all to New Leftists, it was, as Van Gosse notes, “how *not* to be radical.”<sup>28</sup> Despite these dismissals a number of connective strands remain that tie the two left formations together. As historians have remarked for some time, many important New Left groups grew out of the institutions, organizations, family structures, or political and cultural currents of the Old Left.<sup>29</sup> As we will come to see, the resurgence of anarchism during the long sixties adds to this historiographical conversation by demonstrating how activists created new forms of political activity by separating themselves off from previous left movements, while at the same time creating a number of political and cultural connections to an older set of anarchist formations through a mixture of memory, direct social contact, and political exchange.

In addition, historians have argued that what helped to define the newness of the New Left was its influence in expanding the definition of what constituted authentic political activity and revolutionary behaviour. Here, New Leftists approached established enemies like capitalism, imperialism, militarism, and environmental degradation in new ways, while also taking on new political problems, cultural challenges, and forms of oppression. Within this analytical context, the New Left reimagined the meaning and role one of the left’s traditional revolutionary agents: the working class. Unlike previous left formations, the New Left tended to question the transformative potential of the proletariat by rejecting or downplaying its political relevance or by emphasizing the greater importance of alternative revolutionary actors such as students, women, racialized people, and the dispossessed.<sup>30</sup> New Leftists also sought to transform the tools, methods, and concepts that underlie revolutionary activity. To do so, they turned much of their attention to the relationship between current action and future objectives. With a strong emphasis on the relationship between means and ends, the New Left had a

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<sup>27</sup> Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada’s Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 183.

<sup>28</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 24.

<sup>29</sup> For two notable examples, see Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); and Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948–1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 248–250; McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 183–184; and Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 2–6.

tendency to place a high degree of importance on political theory and philosophical debate since these modes of interpretation were seen as vital aspects of political struggle.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the New Left was created in the context of a diversity of social movement activism. These forms of organizing included aspects of the student, labour, and anti-war movements, environmentalism, women's liberation, queer resistance, and a collection of anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and anti-racist struggles.<sup>32</sup> This activism helped to generate the political concerns of the New Left, while also operating as critical sites for the application of New Left analyses and practices. In this sense, the New Left was created through the interactions between specific activist projects and a significant collection of revolutionary ideas, approaches, and cultures.

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<sup>31</sup> See Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 250–253.

<sup>32</sup> For an exploration of the development of the New Left on Canadian university campuses, see Roberta Lexier, "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities," in *Debating Dissent*, 81–96; Marcel Martel, "'Riot' at Sir George Williams: Giving Meaning to Student Dissent," in *Debating Dissent*, 97–114; John Cleveland, "'Berkeley North': Why Simon Fraser University Had the Strongest 1960s Student Power Movement," in *The Sixties in Canada*, 193–232; and Hugh J. M. Johnson, *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005). For labour and the New Left, see Isitt, *Militant Minority*; and Ian Milligan, *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014). On the related theme of working-class militancy in the context of the 1960s, see Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, chap. 7. For the connections between feminism and the New Left see, Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin, 2005); Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988); Joan Sangster, "Radical Ruptures: Feminism, Labor, and the Left in the Long Sixties in Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2010): 1–21; and McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 192–210. For an excellent study of the topic in the context of the United States, see Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The '60s and its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Examples of the emerging scholarship on the anti-war movement can found in Kathleen Rodgers, *Welcome to Resisterville: American Dissidents in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Lara Campbell, "'Women United Against the War': Gender Politics, Feminism, and Vietnam Draft Resistance in Canada," in *New World Coming*, 339–346; and Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 258–278. On the intersection of environmentalism, the counterculture, and the 1960s, see Frank Zelko, *Make It a Green Peace!: The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). For studies on the relationship between queer liberation, the New Left, and the 1960s, see Gary Kinsman, "The Canadian National Security War on Queers and the Left," in *New World Coming*, 77–87. For an expanded conversation on the topic, see Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). On the New Left's intersection with the politics of race and colonialism, see Lee Maracle, *Bobbie Lee: Indian Rebel* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1990); "Red Power Legacies and Lives: An Interview with Scott Rutherford," in *New World Coming*, 358–367; Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); and David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010).

Intersecting at critical junctures with both the New Left and the idea of a long sixties is that of a counterculture. Like the New Left, the definition and meaning of the counterculture is multifaceted, unstable, and open to diverse historical interpretations.<sup>33</sup> As David Farber has written, historians and academics have applied the term loosely, using it to encapsulate nearly anything, from nebulous patterns of social discontent to youth fashion and aesthetics. The problem with these definitions, Farber suggests, is that they “have so broadened the meaning of the word counterculture as to make it nearly meaningless.”<sup>34</sup> Scholars also note that the counterculture cannot be seen as a unified force. Writing in the context of the United States, Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle have cautioned against just this, maintaining that the term counterculture “falsely reifies what should never properly be called a social movement.”<sup>35</sup> Instead, these authors maintain that it was an “inherently unstable collection of attitudes, tendencies, postures, gestures, ‘lifestyles,’ ideals, visions, hedonistic pleasures, moralisms, negations, and affirmations.”<sup>36</sup> Concurring with this assessment set out by Doyle and Braunstein, Farber has therefore proposed that the counterculture was “not a political movement with a clear platform or a social club with a membership roll. It was a project to which many lent a hand.”<sup>37</sup>

The geographical distribution of these histories of the sixties, the New Left, and the counterculture have been highly asymmetrical, with a large number of studies focused on the United States, and comparatively few on Canada.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, over

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<sup>33</sup> For writing on the counterculture in Canada, see Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Marcel Martel, “‘They smell bad, have diseases, and are lazy’: RCMP Officers Reporting on Hippies in the Late Sixties,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (2009): 215–245; Myrna Kostash, *A Long Way from Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980); and Ron Verzuh, *Underground Times: Canada’s Flower-Child Revolutionaries* (Toronto: Deneau, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> David Farber, “Building the Counterculture, Creating Right Livelihoods: The Counterculture at Work,” *The Sixties* 6, no. 1 (2013): 1–2.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, “Introduction: Historicizing the American Counterculture of the 1960s and ‘70s,” in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and ‘70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 10.

<sup>36</sup> Braunstein and Doyle, “Introduction,” 10.

<sup>37</sup> Farber, “Building the Counterculture, Creating Right Livelihoods,” 2.

<sup>38</sup> While this asymmetry no doubt reflects the fact that the size of the American historical profession is larger than it is north of the border, the phenomena might also be explained by the ways in which the social upheavals of the long sixties are more intertwined with American party

the last decade historians have increasingly focused on Canada's relationship to the sixties, the New Left, and the counterculture. Here, Sean Mills and David Austin have both offered thoughtful treatments of radical activism in sixties Montreal in ways that link the transnational influence of a wide array of New Left and postcolonial ideas to different articulations of race and nationality in that city.<sup>39</sup> Work by Joan Sangster on labour, feminism, and the New Left has expanded the discussion over the connections between gender, class, and periodization,<sup>40</sup> while Gary Kinsman has illustrated how government surveillance and political repression provides us with a new window for viewing the interactions between the state, queer communities, and the New Left.<sup>41</sup> New writing on the counterculture has also been a part of the growing conversation over Canada's sixties, a topic taken up by Stuart Henderson in his account of hip Toronto, and Lawrence Aronsen's popular history of Vancouver as a city of "love and revolution."<sup>42</sup> In addition, there are also a growing number of edited collections that approach the period from a wide array of perspectives,<sup>43</sup> as well as nationally oriented narratives such as Bryan Palmer's *Canada's 1960s*, which takes on a staggering array of topics related to Canadian identity, politics, culture, and activism.<sup>44</sup>

Narratives of exchange and connection, arranged both spatially, politically, culturally, and temporally, are often at the heart of these histories. Yet there have been very few considerations of the links between the New Left, the counterculture, and

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politics than they are in Canada. For discussions on the memory of the sixties within the contemporary political climate of the United States, see Heale, "The Sixties as History," 134; and Varon, Foley and McMillan, "Time is an Ocean: The Past and Future of the Sixties," 2.

<sup>39</sup> Sean Mills, *The Empire Within*; David Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, The Caribbean, and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (Autumn, 2007): 516–539; Austin, "An Embarrassment of Omissions, or Rewriting the Sixties: The Case of the Caribbean Conference Committee, Canada, and the Global New Left," in *New World Coming*, 368–378. Ian McKay and Bryan Palmer have also both offered commentary on the New Left and Quebec. See Ian McKay, *Rebels, Red, Radicals*, 183–192; Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 311–365.

<sup>40</sup> Joan Sangster, "Radical Ruptures," 1–21.

<sup>41</sup> Gary Kinsmen, "The Canadian National Security War on Queers and the Left," 77–86.

<sup>42</sup> Henderson, *Making the Scene*; Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Campbell, Clement, and Kealley ed., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*; M Athena Palaeologu ed., *The Sixties in Canada*.

<sup>44</sup> Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*.



anarchism.<sup>45</sup> To find the seeds of these connections and the ways in which they fostered a growing anarchist presence in the city, this chapter now turns to the experiences of two student activists: Larry Gambone and Ken Lester. Both active in the student movement at Simon Fraser University at the end of the 1960s, they experienced the New Left in ways that were profoundly exciting, rewarding, frustrating, and disappointing, experiences that motivated them to join with other radical malcontents to push aspects of the city's New Left in new political and cultural directions that included an engagement with the counterculture and anarchism. Rooted in the context of Vancouver's long sixties, Gambone and Lester's experiences also demonstrate how older radicals could operate as important influences on the development of the New Left, as well as illustrating how the transnational movement of people and political ideas helped to refashion local political environments. As a result, the chapter demonstrates that the student New Left operated as an essential site for a resurging anarchist politics that bridged both the local and the global, and the present and past.

As with their American counterparts, Canadian universities provided a critical setting for the social struggles of the long sixties.<sup>46</sup> Not only did universities provide students with the time, resources, and collective experiences to explore a fantastic array of radical ideas, but life on campus also led students to encounter a number of social, economic, and political conflicts that ran through the expansion and transformation of post-secondary education in the post-war years. This was particularly true at Simon Fraser University, where conflicts between students, faculty, and the administration helped to radicalize the New Left community on campus.<sup>47</sup> From 1967 to 1969, activists organized a teaching assistant strike, a student occupation of one of the administration

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<sup>45</sup> Larry Gambone and Bob Sarti have both created important exceptions to this pattern. See Gambone, *No Regrets*; and Bob Sarti, *Yippies in Love* (Vancouver: Theater in the Raw Collective, 22 June–3 July 2011), stage production.

<sup>46</sup> See Lexier, "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities," in *Debating Dissent*, 81–82; and Michael Maurice Dufresne, "Let's Not be Cremated Equal': The Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1959–1967," in *The Sixties in Canada*, 9–64. While much of the emphasis in the area of campus politics placed students at the centre of the narrative, the period was also a transformative one for those employed as faculty members within the expanding post-secondary system. See Catherine Gidney, "The Canadian Association of University Teachers and the Rise of Faculty Power, 1951–1970," in *Debating Dissent*, 67–79.

<sup>47</sup> For recent histories of SFU's student movement see, Ian Milligan, "Coming Off the Mountain: Forging an Outward-Looking New Left at Simon Fraser University," *BC Studies* 171 (Autumn, 2011): 69–91. See also, John Cleveland, "'Berkeley North'"; and Johnston, *Radical Campus*.

buildings, and a faculty strike supported by thousands of sympathetic students. This activity at SFU was part of a wave of campus revolts that swept across the nation at the end of the 1960s, a period of struggle that also saw a perceptible shift in the political leanings of the New Left.<sup>48</sup> As both Palmer and Mills note, a sense of frustration over the slow pace of change pushed many activists both on and off campus to seek out a more rigorous body of revolutionary theory and practice.<sup>49</sup> To do so, young activists began the process of cobbling together systems of thinking that mixed Marx and Lenin with a more contemporary pastiche of anti-imperialist approaches drawn from Che Guevara, Régis Debray, Franz Fanon, and Kwame Nkrumah. Often outshining them all, however, was the influence of Maoism. As Mills notes, it hardly mattered that North American New Leftists lacked a nuanced understanding of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Like many transnational exchanges, “they saw in it what they wanted to see: a revolt of the masses against bureaucracy, a desire to renew socialism from below, and the forging of a new relationship between the leaders and the led.”<sup>50</sup>

While Maoism offered a new generation of activists a meaningful and exciting body of revolutionary ideas and practices, its grip on the New Left was far from secure. Initially drawn in by the excitement and revolutionary mystique of these communist traditions, some activists became disenchanted with their application. In this sense, a critical feature of the student New Left was its ability to generate internal political conflicts that helped to create new political perspectives and activist projects. This was the case for Larry Gambone, a student at Simon Fraser University during the late 1960s and an energetic participant in the New Left environment on campus. Like many other young student activists, Gambone was attracted to the excitement and influence of the revolutionary left.<sup>51</sup> Seeking a movement “with teeth,” his initial curiosity was sustained by the writing, activism, and theory of a mixed body of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism.<sup>52</sup> However, by the summer of 1968, much of his initial enthusiasm had soured. These New

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<sup>48</sup> Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 288–9.

<sup>49</sup> Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 278–279; Mills, *The Empire Within*, 210.

<sup>50</sup> Mills, *The Empire Within*, 210.

<sup>51</sup> Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Larry Gambone, *The View from Anarchist Mountain: Rants, Reviews and Explorations from an Anarchist Perspective* (Nanaimo: Red Lion Press, 2010), 187.

<sup>52</sup> Larry Gambone, *Vancouver Yippie!: BC Counterculture No. 2* (Nanaimo: Red Lion Press, [n.d.]), 9.

Left elements had created a political vibrancy on campus, but they also, in Gambone's experience, ushered in creeping dogmatism within certain campus groups, such as the Students for a Democratic University (SDU). Initially active in the SDU, Gambone experienced Maoism as a force that transformed the student movement into something that was ideologically myopic, humourless, and contrary to the "free and open ways of the early New Left."<sup>53</sup> Such experiences displayed a frustrating contradiction. While student radicals like Gambone no longer felt at home within student New Left institutions, they still saw themselves as leftists and revolutionaries. Moreover, they were also unwilling to jettison their affiliation with many aspects of the contemporary counterculture since it was seen as carrying within its cultural praxis synergies and affiliations shared by the New Left.

Such frustrations were drawn onto the pages of *Solidarity Magazine*, a short-lived periodical that Gambone and other SDU dissidents created at SFU in 1969. While the journal took up a wide range of political and cultural issues, it was the initiation of the comic strip "Little Man" that most poignantly reflected a sense of political and cultural displacement within the student New Left. The comic was based around a storyline that chronicled the travels of Karl Marx as he visited a university campus that looked remarkably similar to SFU. During his sojourn, Marx is drawn into the orbit of a Maoist student group focused on overthrowing capitalism. Unfortunately, when Marx goes to hear the group speak, his long hair and beard get him mistaken for a hippie. In response, a soapboxing Maoist berates Marx as a bourgeois idealist and a counter-revolutionary, and warns the communist that he is sure to meet an unfortunate demise after the installation of the "cultural revolution." Freaked out and confused by this experience, Marx flees the meeting only to crash into the arms of a longhaired student. Like the Maoist, the hippie mistakes Marx for a member of the counterculture. Overjoyed to see a fellow "head" hanging around campus, he regales the German philosopher with stories from a recent drug trip fuelled by a mélange of hashish, LSD, and mescaline. When Marx questions the degree to which those substances might impede revolutionary activity, the longhair loses his cool, and the old communist is again left on his own.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gambone, *Vancouver Yippie!*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> "The Little Man Goes to School," *Solidarity Magazine* 1, no. 2 (1969): 3–4, Larry Gambone personal papers.

Marx's predicament expressed the themes of political and cultural disillusionment and displacement within the student New Left. However, because *Solidarity Magazine* folded before the comic strip concluded its narrative, the reader never learns if Marx is united with a kindred spirit at the modern university. Yet, if Marx's fate at SFU remained shrouded in isolation, Gambone and others like him were able to identify and embrace new radical communities. Such a process took place both within the context of the broader student movement at SFU, and also expanded beyond that world, both spatially and temporally, in a range of ways.

In 1968, amidst his musings on the changes taking place within SDU, a close friend of Gambone gave him a copy of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. Published in 1938, well before his better-known works *Animal Farm* and *1984*, *Homage to Catalonia* detailed Orwell's personal experiences as a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). It was also a narrative that closely detailed the development of the country's militant anarchist movement, its struggles against fascism, and its ultimate destruction at the hands of Soviet-backed partisans who turned on their anarchist comrades.<sup>55</sup> More than a gripping tale, *Homage* demonstrated a poignant political irony. Orwell had shown Gambone the spectre of a profoundly moving, relevant, and alternative form of socialism, one that was not directed through the tightly controlled political cadres that were appearing within the New Left, but through a decentralized network of worker-controlled collectives and anti-hierarchical affinity groups. Unfortunately, such a left alternative no longer seemed to exist. Just at that point when Gambone was in desperate need of inspiration, Orwell provided the glimpse of a new model before quickly dashing that example on the rocks of Soviet betrayal. The final twist in this reading came from the fact that Gambone understood this revelation to be something more than a historical injustice. For this young New Leftist, anarchism's death in 1938 was connected to the struggles within SDU in 1968. This was demonstrated by the understanding that the Spanish anarchists had been "stabbed in the back by the Stalinists, the ideological forebears of the Maoism to which I had been attracted."<sup>56</sup> In this way, Gambone read the experiences of older leftists such as Orwell in ways that supported his political disillusionment with Maoism, while also engendering new political possibilities in the form of anarchism.

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<sup>55</sup> George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (New York: Harcourt/Brace, 1952).

<sup>56</sup> Gambone, *Vancouver Yippie!*, 10.

If memories of the Spanish Civil War helped to usher in new conversations about anarchism and its connection to the student New Left, older local activists also had a role to play in the process. In 1969, the year after his experience with Orwell, Gambone stumbled across a crudely mimeographed leaflet stuck to a campus bulletin board. The leaflet called on him to join the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW/Wobblies). Initially, the IWW seemed out of place in the context of SFU at the end of the 1960s.<sup>57</sup> A militant syndicalist labour organization formed in Chicago in 1905, it quickly spread its message of direct action and industrial organizing to the logging operations, railway camps, and dockyards of western Canada and the United States. However, like the Spanish anarchists, the IWW too seemed to have disappeared from the political landscape, smashed by the red scares that followed the end of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the North American labour wars of the interwar period.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, the IWW poster suggested that the organization had far from disappeared. Following the directions to a basement suit in Vancouver's west-side borough of Kitsilano, he and an interested SFU colleague were introduced to the pamphlet's author, J.B. McAndrews. In his late fifties or early sixties, McAndrews was a local organizer for the IWW.<sup>59</sup> The two young activists joined the IWW on the spot and were soon regular features at McAndrews's home, pouring over the older Wobbly's extensive collection of radical pamphlets, newspapers, and books. McAndrews's collection of materials further convinced Gambone that anarchism and syndicalism were living traditions that had a direct political relevance to the political struggles of the sixties.<sup>60</sup> In this sense, no other point was more important than the notion that the

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<sup>57</sup> Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Gambone, *No Regrets*, 76–81; Gambone, *The View From Anarchist Mountain*, 185–188.

<sup>58</sup> On the history of the IWW, see Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990); Richard Rajala, "A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World," *Labor History* 37, no. 2 (1996): 205–234; Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989); Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); and Heather Mayer, "Beyond the Rebel Girl: Women, Wobblies, Respectability, and the Law in the Pacific Northwest, 1905–1924," (PhD diss, Simon Fraser University, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Gambone, *No Regrets*, 66.

<sup>60</sup> Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Gambone, *The View From A Mountain*, 186.

anarcho-syndicalism of the IWW sought to create a new society in the shell of the old by empowering people through struggle that they could control themselves. This meant, above all, a rejection of representative democracy as defined by partisan politics and state bureaucracies, and the smashing of capitalism. In its place, the IWW sought a federated and decentralized system of workers' councils that would bridge the inevitable diversities of working-class life. Of central importance to this notion of direct democracy was the use of direct action, sabotage, and the strike, tools that workers could wield on their own terms. In contrast to this were the disempowering effects of the wage system, parliamentary representation, and labour bureaucracy.<sup>61</sup>

Gambone's exposure to *Homage to Catalonia* and the IWW, and his sense of what they could offer New Leftists says something important about how social movements operated over wide reaches of space and time. While historians have often argued that the New Left emerged, in part, from the Old Left, either through family connections that transmitted political change across generations, or through processes in which New Left political currents emerged from conflicts within older left institutions, anarchism's resurgence reflected a somewhat different process.<sup>62</sup> Certainly McAndrews' importance to a new generation of Wobblies demonstrated that young anarchists across the long sixties had, for demographic reasons, access to a wide current of older radicals. After all, those anarchists who had fought in Spain in their twenties, thirties, or forties, were in their fifties, sixties, or seventies by the 1960s. This generation of anarchists would be old in some ways, but not too old to have an impact on the lives and imaginations of young radicals thirsty for political inspiration. In this sense, the perception of anarchism as a political tradition that lived only in the past was a trope.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, if we are to come to a nuanced understanding of anarchism's resurgence across the long sixties, we must see the impact of older local activists in conjunction with the continuing relevance of anarchism's political and cultural memory.

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<sup>61</sup> For a discussion on the IWW and radical tactics, see Leier, *Rebel Life*, 25–28.

<sup>62</sup> For extensive conversations about the relationship between the Old Left and New Left, see Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer*; and Isitt, *Militant Minority*.

<sup>63</sup> To be fair, anarchists were often involved in creating and maintaining these tropes. For example, the anarchist historian and literary critic, George Woodcock, concluded the 1962 edition of his history of anarchism with the destruction of the Spanish anarchist movement, a narrative positioning that operated as a death knell for the wider movement. See Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 7–8.

What is particularly significant about older radicals like McAndrews is that they illustrated that both processes could be intertwined within the same person. For New Leftists like Gambone, older radicals were symbols that radiated both contemporary and historical meaning, meaning that coalesced into a pattern of political militancy that extended over different articulations of time and space.<sup>64</sup> Taken together, Orwell and McAndrews provided Gambone with a political and cultural memory that stretched to the early years of the twentieth century and spanned both sides of the Atlantic. Put to use in the context of 1968–1969, this left memory provided Gambone with two particular lessons: first, a historic confirmation of the violence and betrayal of capitalism, the state, and the Soviet system—patterns of activity that delegitimized both communism as a political ideology and the state as tool for reform; and second, established examples of decentralized and anti-hierarchical socialism. In this sense, what seemed different about anarchism was that its oldness did not bring with it themes of clunky bureaucracy, cultural sterility, or political betrayal, as it did when attached to the political memory of Marxism-Leninism. Instead, it radiated a collection of new meanings in which the militant weight of anarchist traditions supported and extended New Left approaches to liberation, participatory democracy, and anti-hierarchical forms of revolutionary socialism.

If Gambone's engagement with anarchism was fostered by moving between Maoism and anarchism, SFU at the end of the 1960s and Spain during the mid-1930s, and the radical worlds of student life and the older activist worlds that lay beyond campus, then other student New Leftists encountered anarchism by moving ever further afield. Such was the case for Ken Lester, whose engagement with anarchism was inseparable from his experiences traveling between New Left student movements in Canada and the United States. Like Gambone, Ken Lester had a number of frustrating experiences within the SFU New Left that pushed him towards an anarchist turn. Born and raised in the working-class suburb of East Vancouver, Lester's decision to attend SFU was heavily shaped by the presence of an emerging student movement on

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<sup>64</sup> Gambone is not alone in demonstrating the ways in which older anarchists could act as bridges to different times and places. Noted anarchists George Woodcock and Stuart Christie have both commented on the ways in which older activists were political markers that were simultaneously contemporary and historical. See Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 383; and Stuart Christie, *Granny Made me an Anarchist: General Franco, The Angry Brigade and Me* (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 33–41. For a broader discussion on how activists in the New Left approached the issues of intergenerational politics, see Holly Scott, "Youth Will Make the Revolution: Creating and Contesting the Youth Frame in the New Left," *Sixties* 7, no. 1 (2014): 28–54.

campus. Lester immediately became active in school demonstrations and mass meetings, and even helped to organize a delegation of East End high school students to come to SFU to meet with their university counterparts. When the conflict broke into its most militant phase, he joined with over a hundred other students to occupy SFU's administrative building in 1968. While Lester escaped the mass arrests that punctuated the end of the occupation, he was highly critical of the direction that the occupation had taken. In particular, he was staunchly against the notion of waiting to be arrested, something that seemed increasingly likely as the police increased their presence on campus. Instead, he argued for a series of revolving occupations that would continue to disrupt the university while avoiding being apprehended by the police. He also did not find much value in the political crisis that developed in the wake of the police action, arguing that the nature of the occupation and the arrests shifted the tenor of the conversation away from the issues of university admissions and towards debates over the nature of academic freedom, the right of students to demonstrate, and the meaning and symbolism of the university's response. While these latter issues were no doubt important, they were not where Lester's interests lay.<sup>65</sup>

Finding that SFU was no longer a suitably radical campus, Lester traveled south in search of forms of political inspiration, immersing himself in a series of radical communities based out of the San Francisco Bay Area. Arriving in 1968, he spent much of his time in the radical student communities that existed in close proximity to the Berkeley campus of the University of California. As a result, Lester found himself increasingly involved in the escalating political radicalism that made Berkeley synonymous with the idea of social protest in the sixties. In particular, Lester became involved in supporting the work of the Third World Liberation Front, a coalition of Latino, Asian, African, and Native American student groups who waged a dramatic student strike in January of 1969 as a means of pushing the university to accept the creation of an Ethnic Studies Department.<sup>66</sup> When the university attempted to break the strike with the support of the police and the National Guard, militant conflicts between students and the armed agents of the state intensified. As the university dug in its heels, Lester

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<sup>65</sup> Ken Lester, interview with author, 31 March 2011.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the Third World Liberation Front Strikes that took place both at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University, see Karen Umemoto, "'On Strike!': San Francisco State College Strike, 1968–1969: The Role of Asian American Students," *Amerasia* 15, no. 1 (1989): 3–41; Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 134.



experienced Berkeley and its surrounding neighborhoods as an urban battleground. Working along side his American colleagues, he learned the best methods for throwing back police tear gas canisters, experimented with diverting squads of riot police away from crowds of demonstrators, and learned how to effectively set up and defend barricades and incapacitate police vehicles. As he trudged through the streets of Berkeley, ducking curfew and the National Guard, it seemed obvious to Lester that these experiences were part and parcel of a much wider rebellion taking place across the world at the end of the 1960s and one that increasingly involved an interaction with anarchism.<sup>67</sup>

While participating in the Third World Liberation Strike, Lester came across his first serious exploration of anarchism in Daniel and Gabriel Cohen-Bendit's, *Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative*. Addressing the failure and betrayal of France's Communist Party in relation to the Paris protests of 1968, the text was also a primer on the historical and contemporary importance of anarchism as a viable left-wing alternative in France and Spain.<sup>68</sup> Like Gambone's experience with *Homage*, *Obsolete Communism* was a revelation for Lester, presenting him with mixture political theory and historical analysis that he found exciting, engaging, and culturally relevant. Lester came away from the text with the sense that anarchism was a political tradition that might help address the sense of disenchantment that he had experienced with his own local communists back in Vancouver. From this mixture of personal experience and literary investigation, Lester moved on to explore a wide range of anarchist topics, including Murray Bookchin's famous polemic, *Listen, Marxist!* and George Woodcock's *Anarchism*, texts that provided a introduction to different forms of anarchist activism from the nineteenth century to Spanish Civil War, and in Bookchin's case, included an appraisal of the anarchist elements within the radical revolts of 1968. Soon, Lester was moving on to writers such as Noam Chomsky and Abbie Hoffman, and a range of contemporary political movements including San Francisco's Diggers, the Dutch group Provos, and the Yippies, all of which merged anarchist-inspired forms of communalism,

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<sup>67</sup> Ken Lester, interview with author, 31 March 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Ken Lester, interview with author, 31 March 2011; Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

direct action, and decentralized extra-parliamentary political action with the political and cultural sensibility of the counterculture.<sup>69</sup>

Gambone and Lester's experiences demonstrate how young activists, both in Vancouver and beyond, experienced the student New Left as both a persistent source of inspiration and frustration for emerging activists during the long sixties. Radicalized within its early political mobilizations at SFU, both men left the main formations associated with campus politics in search of alternatives that would be revolutionary, culturally flexible, yet also avoid the trappings of a Leninist or Maoist inspired New Left. Anarchism offered this alternative, both as a means of expanding their personal critiques and criticisms of Marxist-Leninist traditions, and by providing a set of meaningful alternatives that operated through a mixture of contemporary relevance and historical memory. Throughout 1969 and 1970, the opportunities for expanding these types of alternatives in Vancouver expanded as elements of SFU's New Left community transformed itself into a broader number of political projects that moved off campus and into the city's neighbourhoods and communities. This process reflected what Ian Milligan has called the emergence of an "outward-looking" current within the SFU New Left, a perspective that sought to create a new set of activist alliances between students and other community groups.<sup>70</sup>

It was within this context of political change that activists such as Gambone, Lester, and two dozen other New Leftists, students, and radical long-hairs met to form a new political collective they called the Northern Lunatic Fringe of the Youth International Party in the spring of 1970.<sup>71</sup> At its height, it drew together a core group of roughly

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<sup>69</sup> Ken Lester, interview with author, 31 March 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Milligan, "Coming Off the Mountain," 69–70; 82–83.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Boudreau has written a clear and concise account of Yippie's involvement in Vancouver's infamous 1971 marijuana smoke-in. However, Boudreau's analysis is orientated primarily towards explaining how the smoke-in turned into a riot. Therefore while Boudreau does well in considering some of the consequences of Yippie activism, there is little sense of where Vancouver Yippies came from, how their politics reflected the mixing currents of the New Left and the counterculture, and what this tells us about the changing nature of radicalism in the city during the long sixties. See "'The Struggle for a Different World': The 1971 Gastown Riot in Vancouver," in *Debating Dissent*, 117–133. In his history of Vancouver in the sixties, Lawrence Aronsen provides a more thorough evaluation of the nature and origin of Yippie's politics. However, Vancouver Yippie's ideas are conflated with the personalities of its most well known activists and its meaning as an organization reduced to an American ethos. Thus, in conducting their own political work, Yippies in Vancouver are said to have taken "a page out of the Abbie Hoffman playbook" or followed the "guidelines proposed by Abbie Hoffman" in developing local Yippie

seventy activists who were in turn connected to an additional network of around two hundred supporters. Overwhelmingly white and Anglophone, Yippie was a mixed gender amalgamation of hip middle-class professionals, workers, and the unemployed.<sup>72</sup> Although Yippies maintained that aspects of the counterculture offered a range of important ideas and practices—from the rejection of work and individualism to the celebration of leisure and communal activity—they also believed that hip communities lacked an explicit revolutionary sensibility that could focus and extend their political potential. As a result, they maintained that the counterculture could gain much from the New Left's emphasis on community organizing, anti-capitalism, and prefigurative and participatory practices. In return, the counterculture could offer the New Left a more relevant cultural framework through which to filter and shape its activism. As a result, Yippie, along with other likeminded groups including the Vancouver Liberation Front (VLF) and Youngblood, created the basis of a countercultural New Left in Vancouver beginning in the early years of the 1970s.<sup>73</sup> This countercultural New Left was critical in developing forms of organizing that merged political activism and popular cultural practice—an activist strategy that, despite the short life of Yippie itself, laid the groundwork for and would continue to profoundly influence, the city's anarchist and cultural communities across the 1970s and 1980s. While the following chapters will delve into the legacies of the countercultural New Left during the 1970s and 1980s, the remainder of this chapter focuses on its initial construction. In doing so, it demonstrates how collectives such as Yippie created new instances of political organizing in Vancouver, and concludes by illustrating how these projects nurtured a growing emphasis on anarchist politics and culture.

Although Vancouver Yippie formed in 1970, it was activists in New York that initiated Yippie as a political and cultural experiment in 1967. First and foremost, the

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projects for Vancouver. Not only do statements like this rob local activists of a sense of agency, but they also accord Hoffman a false sense of ownership over the ideas and traditions that Yippie practiced. See Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 116–117.

<sup>72</sup> Larry Gambone, interview with author, 5 April 2013.

<sup>73</sup> David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011; Bev Davies, interview with author, 7 February 2012; Ken Lester, interview with author, 15 April 2011; Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011. For perspectives on the countercultural New Left in the United States, see Doug Rossinow, "The Revolution Is About Our Lives": The New Left's Counterculture,' in *Imagine Nation*, 99–124; and Michael William Doyle, "Staging the Revolution: Guerrilla Theater as a Countercultural Practice, 1965–68," in *Imagine Nation*, 71–97.

instigation of the Youth International Party was developed as a short-term collective with the purpose of bringing a mixture of antiwar activists, Black Power radicals, and countercultural freaks together for the 1968 Democratic Party Convention in Chicago, both as a means of protesting the Vietnam war, but also in hope that their coexistence in the city could lead to patterns of radical mixing and political integration. Yet, as Michael Doyle has noted, Yippie's approach to the Chicago protest differed from many of the previous political mobilizations of the sixties. At the centre of this difference was Yippie's desire to create a staged cultural confrontation. To do so, organizers sought to draw contingents of hip youth to Chicago in order to put the forms, sounds, and symbols of countercultural living on full display. The goal was to create a counter-convention in which the visibility and outrageousness of their physical difference would create a "frontal assault on American culture."<sup>74</sup>

Yippie's love of the absurd and its playful use of satire and parody reflected the changing political tactics and cultural assumptions of certain New Leftists in both the United States and in Canada. For close to two years starting in 1970, Yippie organized a series of public actions in Vancouver and the surrounding area that blurred the boundary between political resistance, community organizing, and the creation of cultural events and services. They often worked closely with other countercultural New Leftists, such as the Vancouver Liberation Front. Both groups were organized into roughly a dozen collective houses spread out around the city, many of which were linked by a shared purchasing co-operative that supplied the collectives with bulk orders of groceries and other necessities. Although at least one of these houses held both VLFers and Yippies, most were set up along organizational lines with VLFers and Yippies living in separate houses. This mixture of connection and separation symbolized the loose relationship that existed between the two groups. Where Yippie was consciously non-hierarchical and flirtatiously anarchic, the VLF was more decidedly Marxist-Leninist.<sup>75</sup> These differences aside, the two groups formed a meaningful relationship over the importance of countercultural activity as a form of political mobilization and dissent, while at the same time advocating for a politicization of the counterculture through a mixture of New Left ideas and practices. It was this dual process of counterculturalizing radical politics

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<sup>74</sup> Doyle, "Staging the Revolution," 89.

<sup>75</sup> Marcy Toms, interview with author, 8 February 2012; David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011.

and politicizing hip culture that united these two groups together into a countercultural New Left.

Both the VLF and Yippie approached revolutionary struggle through conducting militant and confrontational forms of public protest and dissent as well as organizing more mundane activities and services that sought to remake the contours of daily life through a mixture of New Left and countercultural ideas. While communal living was seen as one method for breaking down the individuality and isolation of modern capitalism, the majority of Yippie's energy went into organizing public forms of political and cultural action. Through a range of different working groups, Vancouver Yippies organized a community library and movie theatre at its downtown headquarters. Members of the collective worked with their colleagues in the VLF to create a new periodical, *The Yellow Journal*, that reported on the activities of the two groups, criticized other activist organizations such as the League for Social Action, and provided a diverse mixture of international news, left history, and cultural commentary. Yippie organized a People's Defense Fund to provide legal services for those that ran afoul of the law, while others within the collective created a benefit committee that organized concerts and social events as a way to raise money for Yippie projects. In addition to organizing a food co-operative to supply Yippie and VLF houses, Yippies also tried their hands at creating a small farming project in the Pemberton Valley that aimed to supply their co-operative and helped to provide produce for the free public meals that they organized in Stanley Park during the summer months.<sup>76</sup>

Yippie's developed alternative community structures and services alongside dramatic acts of resistance, actions that mixed elements of civil disobedience, physical obstruction, public protest, and guerrilla theatre. Some of these actions, such as the trashing of the American consulate the Yippie/VLF invasion of the American border town of Blaine, Washington, were positioned as acts of resistance against American imperialism abroad and its tyrannical behaviour on home soil, forms of violence that were most dramatically symbolized by the Kent State shootings and Richard Nixon's escalation of the war in Southeast Asia. As direct responses to these acts of state violence, the attacks on the consulate and the town of Blaine were articulated as acts of

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<sup>76</sup> Larry Gambone, interview with author, 5 April 2013. For examples of VLF and Yippie collaboration and their critiques of the League for Social Action, see "Doin' Their Duty," *Yellow Journal* (7 May 1970): 1.

counter-force that demonstrated the willingness and ability of everyday people to resist the global violence of American imperialism. Marching to the consulate on 8 May 1970, Yippies and their supporters defaced American government property by pulling off the Great Seal of the United States from the building's exterior. An American flag was also confiscated from the site and ritualistically burned, while protestors made their way inside and trashed the office as best they could before the police arrived to break-up the confrontation. The following day, the VLF, Yippies, and other allies proclaimed that if the United States were to continue to invade the nations of South East Asia, then Canadian activists would respond with an invasion of their own. As a result, 600 protestors boldly stormed across the Peace Arch border crossing south of Vancouver and into Blaine where they undertook spirited acts of mayhem and property destruction before drawing back across the border.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to symbolic acts of retribution against the violence of American imperialism, Yippie's public acts of protest also focused on local issues they saw as critical to the politicization of the counterculture. Shortly before Yippies participated in the attack on the American consulate, they had spent several hours occupying a coffee shop in the bottom of the Hudson's Bay Department store. Dubbed a "sip-in" by Yippie, the occupiers assembled en masse to protest the harassment of hip youth by Bay security staff.<sup>78</sup> Like the sit-in tactics used by civil rights and labour activists, the sip-in was based on the idea that the collective occupation of public spaces could be a powerful way of defying the cultural intransigence of the department store, while at the same time affirming a sense of collective solidarity and the right to assemble. Similarly, when developers announced plans to construct a Four Seasons Hotel next to Stanley Park, Yippie organized a year-long occupation that blocked the construction of the project by transforming the proposed site into a "people's park" through the constant physical presence of occupiers, squatters, and activists.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Youth International Party, "A Note at the Start," *Yippie News Service* 2, [n.d.], 1, author's personal papers.

<sup>78</sup> "Youth International Party YIP NLF Press Release," [n.d.], author's personal papers; "Yippies Trip To Sip-in," *Yellow Journal* (7 May 1970), 9.

<sup>79</sup> "All Seasons Park," [n.d.], broadsheet, author's personal papers; David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011. See also, Larry Gambone, *No Regrets: Counter-culture and Anarchism in Vancouver* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2015), 114–115.

The Bay sip-in and the occupation of Stanley Park were not spontaneous outbursts, but rather emerged from the growing tensions between the local counterculture and the city's administration, particularly the office of Mayor Tom Campbell and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). Like San Francisco, Vancouver had received its own fair share of hip migration through the latter years of the 1960s. By 1967, neighbourhoods such as Gastown on the east-side of downtown, and the west-side community of Kitsilano were prominent hip enclaves. As a growing number of longhairs spread out into the city's squares, parks, street corners, and cafes, city administrators and police officials raised the spectre of moral degeneration, crime, and the breakdown of social respectability. Offended and outraged at the counterculture's existence, city officials supported the VPD's use of vagrancy bylaws to harass the physical presence of hip youth in the city while also mobilizing charges of criminal libel and obscenity against hip periodicals such as the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>80</sup> Talking to CBC Television in 1968, Mayor Tom Campbell praised and supported the use this force and bluntly castigated the counterculture as an emerging "scum community" whose slothful, filthy, and parasitical nature was a serious threat to the moral and material wellbeing of Vancouverites. Equally as distressing to the Mayor, however, was the fact that this threat was "organized."<sup>81</sup> The development of countercultural New Left groups such as Yippie and the VLF exacerbated these civic concerns by attempting to organize and agitate the counterculture into a force for radical social change. This approach was well demonstrated by Yippie's promotion of recreational drug use in Vancouver beginning in 1971.

As an illegal cultural activity, the recreational use of drugs by the counterculture meant that the city administration could use the power of prohibition to try and solve Vancouver's so-called hippy problem. As a result, issues surrounding the nature and meaning of drug use became a political and cultural rallying point for Yippie as activists used debates over the consumption of drugs both to promote the cultural values of the counterculture and also to contest the political authority of the city's administration. That intoxication and politicization could be connected at all is something that has not been well understood in the historiographical writing of Vancouver's New Left or its

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<sup>80</sup> Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 49.

<sup>81</sup> Tom Campbell, televised interview with Doug Collins for the 7 O'Clock Show, 18 March 1968, CBC Archives, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/vancouver-politicians-averse-to-hippies>CBC archives. Campbell. 1968.

counterculture.<sup>82</sup> Yet, for countercultural New Leftists, both in Vancouver and elsewhere, drugs such as marijuana, hashish, peyote, LSD, and hallucinogenic mushrooms were understood to be profoundly political substances imbued with the power to liberate individual and collective consciousness. In this sense, drugs provided a chemical form of mental stimulation that could help initiate, support, or extend processes of personal introspection, deep thinking, transformed consciousness, and alternative forms of perspective.

One of the most evocative writers on this subject was the American Yippie Jerry Rubin. Focusing extensively on marijuana, Rubin argued that pot was political for its ability to override and deconstruct the social and cultural myths that people had internalized over the course of their lives. In this reading, marijuana chemically erased the mental orders set by capitalism and the state, and returned the brain to a unified whole capable of comprehending life in a more totalizing sense. Positing an intoxicated state as an alternative form of education, Rubin argued that, where school forced students to artificially partition their minds into “subjects, categories, divisions, concepts. Pot scrambles up our brains and presents everything as one perfect mess.”<sup>83</sup> Just as it erased these mental impediments, marijuana stimulated forms of cultural practice that remade the social environment of those who used it. Cultures of smoking and the materiality of marijuana’s physical properties, particularly the passing of joints from person to person and the enveloping nature of pot smoke, provided Rubin with a powerful series of metaphors that highlighted political and cultural themes such as communalism and the erasure of the physical barriers between the bodies and minds of users.<sup>84</sup> Such characteristics enabled marijuana to be framed as a form of revolutionary culture because it set the conditions for new forms of collective engagement,

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<sup>82</sup> Aronson’s analysis of Yippie’s approach to drug use is a case in point. While it does well in emphasizing the politics of prohibition, what is missing is a more extensive conversation over how the countercultural New Left linked intoxication to consciousness raising and other forms of personal political and philosophical exploration. See, Aronson, *City of Love and Revolution*, 120–124. For histories that explicitly take up these issues, see Ericka Dyck, *Psychedelic Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Don Lattin, *The Harvard Psychedelic Club: How Timothy Leary, Ram Dass, Huston Smith, and Andrew Weil Killed the Fifties and Ushered In a New Age for America* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2010). See also, Marcel Martel, *Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy, and the Marijuana Question, 1961–1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> Jerry Rubin, *Do it!: Scenarios of the Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 98.

<sup>84</sup> Rubin, *Do it!*, 98.



communication, and solidarity. In these ways, Rubin argued that the revolutionary potential of pot emerged both from the experiences of being high and from the social and cultural connections of shared use, noting that “[p]ot-heads smoke together. We get high and get together. Into ourselves and into each other. How can we make a revolution except together?”<sup>85</sup>

If the radicalism of marijuana was linked to the expansion of individual and collective liberation, its use also said something about the politics of repression. Because it was a prohibited substance, the use and possession of marijuana could easily lead to the criminalization of the smoker, experiences that could lead to a series of dramatic legal, social, and physical conflicts. “As pot-heads,” Rubin argued, “we come face-to-face with the real world cops, jails, courts, trials, undercover narcs, paranoia and the war with our parents. An entire generation of flower-smokers has been turned into criminals.” For Rubin, these patterns of criminalization produced new opportunities for radicalism. In this sense, Rubin maintained that using marijuana “teaches us disrespect for the law and the courts.”<sup>86</sup> As a result, pot’s politics was inseparable from its illegality. Yippie activists saw marijuana as an important site for the intersection of cultural agitation, social critique, and political organization. This was particularly true in the context of Vancouver, where Yippie activists staged a series of actions that sought to popularize and promote the revolutionary potential of marijuana as means of creating popular forms of political protest and organization.

Prohibited under the Criminal Code, and therefore illegal everywhere in Canada, local patterns of drug enforcement were nevertheless critical in shaping the marijuana debate in Vancouver. As Michael Boudreau has demonstrated, the VPD held broad discretion in how they approached the enforcement of drug laws in the city, creating a intensified focus on drug enforcement in hip boroughs beginning in the summer of 1971. Referred to as Operation Dustpan, it used a mixture of undercover officers and regular police forces to arrest 109 individuals, fifty-nine of whom were located in Gastown, on possession charges within the first ten days of the operation.<sup>87</sup> In response to Operation Dustpan, Yippie initiated Operation Whirlwind, a campaign that attempted to aid those

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<sup>85</sup> Rubin, *Do it!*, 101.

<sup>86</sup> Rubin, *Do It!*, 100.

<sup>87</sup> Boudreau, “The 1971 Gastown Riot in Vancouver,” 122–123.

who had been arrested on drug charges, initiate debate over the use of drug laws as a method of social, political, and cultural oppression, and develop public forms of protest that sought to collectively challenge and resist the implementation of those policies in ways that were not only politically potent, but also culturally accessible.

Vancouver Yippie shared with the countercultural New Left the perspective that drugs such as marijuana, hash, LSD, and peyote had political potential and that this potential was rooted in the relationship between the drug's pharmacological nature and human culture. Like Rubin, they saw a direct correlation between drug-based experiences and a radical reinterpretation of one's personal and political environment. In this particular sense, getting high was understood as a process that could help channel or expand individual and collective forms of conciseness in progressive ways. However, not all drugs were equal to this task. For Larry Gambone, marijuana, hash, peyote, and LSD represented "the people's drugs," while cocaine, heroin, and amphetamines were interpreted as "the Man's drugs." In dividing psychoactive substances in this way, activists imposed political meanings on the drug itself, as well as on the user of that drug. For example, Yippies maintained that the people's drugs were of the people because they led to progressive forms of consciousness-raising and because they were understood to be non-addictive. As a result, their use was not interpreted as leading to patterns of biological and social dependency. Instead, they reflected the meanings of free choice and voluntary consumption, definitions that helped to associate them with the politics of liberation and revolutionary struggle conducted along non-hierarchical lines. The Man's drugs, however, were the antithesis of this relationship. Here, the experiences of intoxication and the long-term social and biological conditions of use imparted a set of political associations that led not to liberation, but to oppression. Opiates and amphetamines were not only substances that dulled the consciousness, but also hooked the user into patterns of addiction. Rather than being aids for political, social, or cultural change, they therefore became tools of enslavement and forced consumption, a process that Yippies like Gambone interpreted as contributing to the patterns of desperate individualism, poverty, and dependency that ran to the heart of modern capitalist existence.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Gambone, interview with author, 5 April 2013.

To promote the use of the people's drugs, Yippie attempted to foster a familiarity with marijuana among the uninitiated by mailing a small number of pre-rolled joints to random individuals, along with a letter of introduction. These marijuana mail-outs were part of a wider campaign organized in May of 1970 by activists across North America in order to move marijuana beyond hip communities and into the straight world. Yippies in Vancouver argued that it was every dope-smoker's "revolutionary responsibility to send at least a few joints to members of his or her community."<sup>89</sup> Through such a collective effort, activists would struggle to expand the presence of psychedelic substances in everyday people's lives, contributing to a process where "[e]veryone will join in the fight to GET NORTH AMERICA HIGH DURING MAY."<sup>90</sup> In addition to the mail-outs, Yippie organized a series of picnics in the city's Queen Elizabeth Park to help promote the consumption of the people's drugs. Like its feed-ins in Stanley Park, these psychedelic picnics were free events at which Yippies circulated through the crowd to distribute marijuana and LSD to anyone who wanted it. Where marijuana mail-outs were individualized and discrete, psychedelic picnics were designed specifically as public events. In this sense, public drug use was promoted as a means of defending and expanding the boundaries of hip culture. Gathering in the park was a means of taking illegal cultural activities and making them accessible through the temporary occupation of public spaces. At the same time, the presence of a large crowd that openly flouted drug laws was also an act of political resistance that mixed civil disobedience and collective security. With so many people breaking the law simultaneously, it was difficult for the few police officers that were conspicuously present to do much about it. As a result, Yippies hoped that more people would feel comfortable attending the picnics, which they hoped would extend marijuana use into new "liberated" territories across the city.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to mail-outs and picnics, Yippie also organized a series of smoke-ins between 1970 and 1971. Like mail-outs, smoke-ins were a continental phenomena beginning in the late 1960s that expanded dramatically over the course of the 1970s. Working from the *Underground Press Syndicate*, the *Alternative Press Syndicate*, as well as Yippie periodicals such the *YIPster Times* and *Overthrow*, Bill Finzel has counted

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<sup>89</sup> "Grass for the Masses," *Yellow Journal* (7 May 1970): 6.

<sup>90</sup> "Grass for the Masses," 6.

<sup>91</sup> "Grass for the Masses," 6.

advertisements for one hundred and thirty-two smoke-ins across the United States and Canada between 1970 and 1983. Of those counted, only three were reported as taking place in Canada: two staged in Vancouver between 1971 and 1972, and one in Edmonton in 1979.<sup>92</sup> Additional events were certainly held both north and south of the border that either escaped the notice of major alternative periodicals or were never advertised in the first place. This was true for Yippie's first smoke-in organized in 1970 in the small town of Cloverdale, some fifty kilometers south-east of Vancouver.<sup>93</sup>

While Yippies in Vancouver and elsewhere saw smoke-ins as a way of extending and promoting hip culture, smoking publicly in organized gatherings was also used as a means of generating forms of resistance to specific political developments. Throughout the 1970s some of the most common causes associated with these smoke-ins were calls against marijuana's prohibition as well as events that sought to publicize, contest, and raise support for activists who, like John Sinclair of the White Panther Party and the Yippie Dana Beal, had been incarcerated on drug charges. Vancouver Yippie's smoke-ins both reflected and contributed to this wider pattern of activism. In doing so, they offered a political critique of the use of prohibition by the city administration, developed new forms of resistance and solidarity to contest those policies, and helped to signal the ways in which the countercultural New Left attempted to develop new methods of organization that blurred the boundary between politics and play.

Smoke-ins were planned moments of civil disobedience designed to contest the arrest of local community members for marijuana-related offences and offer them a measure of symbolic support by reenacting the offences with which they had been charged. As drug arrests rose over 1970 and 1971, culminating into Operation Dustpan, Yippie organized a massive smoke-in in the heart of Vancouver's eastside neighbourhood of Gastown. Called the Grasstown Smoke-in and Street Jamboree, leaflets for the event framed the gathering as a opportunity to express support for and solidarity with the over one hundred people that had been arrested in the proceeding several weeks, both in Gastown and other hip enclaves such as Kitsilano. Yippie argued

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<sup>92</sup> Bill Finzel, "Every Smoke-in Ever Reported in the Alternative Press, 1970–1983," in *Blacklisted News, Secret History: From Chicago '68 to 1984: The New Yippie Book*, ed. New Yippie Book Collective (New York: Bleecker Pub., 1983), 487–496.

<sup>93</sup> For coverage of the Cloverdale smoke-in, see "Life Culture Blooms at Cloverdale," *Yellow Journal* (23 April 1970): 3.

that if everyone brought marijuana to the event, then a mass smoke-in could help send a signal of support to those that were incarcerated, demonstrating to “our people in jail that they are not alone.”<sup>94</sup> Together, the assembled smokers would collectively break the power of prohibition through a mass moment of collective refusal. Regardless of what the Criminal Code proclaimed, the effective power of prohibition would vanish if people refused to give their consent to the dictates of the state. As a process of spatial and political transformation, Yippie argued that popular action had the potential to turn Gastown into “Grasstown,” even if only for a brief moment.<sup>95</sup>

Smoke-ins also enabled Yippie to construct alternative narratives regarding the meaning and nature of Operation Dustpan. Here, the organization of Operation Whirlwind helped to create an invigorated political environment where activists could highlight patterns of social violence and the class-based nature of the justice system. Yippie argued that increased arrests were part of a systematic pattern of police violence, one that played itself out in the streets of the city’s east end through an unending progression of unwarranted interrogations, illegal searches, trumped-up arrests, and police assaults. In this way, activists used Operation Whirlwind as an opportunity to discuss how drug laws facilitated and supported a wide range of authoritarian measures conducted by the VPD.<sup>96</sup>

At the centre of Yippie’s critique of prohibition was the allegation that arrests based on narcotics violations displayed the deep hypocrisy of the justice system in which drug laws were selectively applied against certain types of citizens based on an amorphous mixture of class, race, and culture. Activists argued that the police disproportionately targeted indigenous, homeless, and hip people with a wide array of criminal charges and bylaw infractions. What made the enforcement of drug laws particularly offensive to Operation Whirlwind’s organizers was that the city was initiating and supporting a public campaign against certain citizens in certain neighbourhoods

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<sup>94</sup> “Grasstown Smoke-In and Street Jamboree,” [1971?], Yippie leaflet, author’s personal papers.

<sup>95</sup> “Grasstown Smoke-In and Street Jamboree.”

<sup>96</sup> “Grasstown Smoke-In and Street Jamboree,”; untitled Yippie broadsheet, [1970/1?], author’s personal papers.

despite the fact that the consumption of marijuana was an extremely popular past time enjoyed by a socially diverse group of city residents.<sup>97</sup>

As a result, Yippie broadsheets and cartoons continually argued that marijuana was a substance whose use spanned social divisions based on class or culture. A Yippie transcript of a mock conversation between a reporter covering the Grasstown Smoke-In and an anonymous demonstrator reiterated this point. When the reporter asks the protestor why he or she is present, the latter replies bluntly “you’re the purpose of this demonstration!” Confused by the allegation, the reporter asks for an explanation. The protestor responds by speculating that the reporter, like many other people at the smoke-in, frequently uses marijuana. After an awkward pause—a moment of silence that serves to imply that the reporter does indeed use the drug—the protestor happily reassures the reporter and argues that smoking dope is a common social practice that unites them all together:

That’s right, you turn on! And so do 35 reporters who work for the *Vancouver Sun*. And so do a lot of the guys at the Vancouver CBC and CHAN TV. And almost every single announcer on every radio pop music station in BC. They all smoke grass. And thousands of office employees, businessmen, truck drivers, millionaires, university professors, policemen, and two prominent members of the Social Credit Party that I happen to turn on with. And so do dozens of lawyers in this area—including seven that I know myself. It happens so often that every other person you meet in Vancouver smokes grass.<sup>98</sup>

When the reporter questions the importance of such a pattern, the protestor argues that despite this extensive pattern of use, straight citizens, professionals, and the rich were not subjected to the power of drug laws. Addressing the reporter, the demonstrator concluded that the “pigs aren’t interested in using the law against people like you.”<sup>99</sup> For

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<sup>97</sup> To help emphasize the double standard, Yippie released a cartoon showing the police, crown, and judiciary collectively consuming marijuana at the same time as they reminisced about their role in convicting a man on drug charges. The cartoon also acted as an advertisement for the Cloverdale smoke-in. See “The Three Little Pigs in Hashing It All Out,” [1970?], Yippie broadsheet, author’s personal papers.

<sup>98</sup> Northern Lunatic Fringe of the Youth International Party, “Drug Crazy Loonies Stage Demonstration for Dope,” [1971?], Yippie broadsheet, author’s personal papers. The fact that Social Credit—a conservative party that formed provincial the government at that time—was tied to drug use in this way helped to highlight the breadth of marijuana usage, as well as emphasize the hypocrisy of conservative critiques of the counterculture.

<sup>99</sup> Northern Lunatic Fringe of the Youth International Party, “Drug Crazy Loonies Stage Demonstration for Dope.”

the demonstrator, recognizing this unevenness was a clear means of rearticulating the nature and meaning of Operation Dustpan. If marijuana use was an endemic and benign aspect of social life in the province, then the “problem” that Dustpan attempted to solve had nothing to do with marijuana as a substance. Instead, Yippie used the notion of this legal double standard to imply that Dustpan’s real objective was to support the wider civic attack on the counterculture. While these activists clearly saw an immense amount of value in the unhampered consumption and promotion of marijuana use that would come through legalization, the critique of prohibition was also strongly rooted in a desire to neutralize the use of drug laws as a political weapon in the hands of the state. Not simply about easing the consumption of marijuana, Operation Whirlwind sought to resist unequal social relationships based on asymmetries of power and influence.

Finally, in addition to highlighting the varied political meanings of pot, Grasstown was also part of Yippie’s attempt to create new forms, methods, and styles of organizing. Like its broader political work in the city, smoke-ins were designed to be fun. Through music, dancing, drugs, humour, and theatrical behavior, the smoke-in was the antithesis of the standard soapbox speech of the established left. If the ideas of the Old Left were clearly out of touch with an emerging generation of left activists, then so too was their delivery. In creating fun events, Yippies approached cultural activity not as something that would support political analysis and critique, but rather something that existed as a valid and authentic form of political practice and analysis in and of itself. Cultural activity was both a method of communication and a manifestation of political practice.<sup>100</sup>

In creating new forms of activism that merged aspects of the New Left and the counterculture, Yippie continually framed its political and cultural work along anarchist lines and, in doing so, provided one of the most important environments for resurgence of anarchist activism in the city. Yippie embraced anarchist approaches to direct democracy, community control, decentralized organization, and critiques of both capitalism and the state. Skirting what its members understood to be the staid and overly serious language of both old and new Marxist-Leninist traditions, Yippie’s anarchist politics was eclectic, flexible, and rigorously non-sectarian. At the same time, while many

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<sup>100</sup> This was not only the case at Grasstown, but also at the smoke-in at Cloverdale that proceeded it where the inclusion of music, singing, and props—including a massive marijuana cigarette—attempted to create a carnivalesque environment that was both playful and avowedly political. See, “Life Culture Blooms at Cloverdale,” 3.

of its most committed and active members either understood themselves as anarchists or drew from its diverse traditions, anarchism never developed a comprehensive presence within local Yippie networks.<sup>101</sup> Rather, the anarchism of Vancouver Yippie was partial and uneven, existing either as an explicit symbol for anti-hierarchical practice or implicitly in ways that were, as the Yippie anarchist Bob Sarti has put it, “congenial” to the political and cultural liberation of the countercultural New Left.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the forms and methods through which activists communicated these ideas and practices were consciously playful. As a result, it is important to take Yippie’s jests, pranks, and absurd witticisms seriously since they reveal key aspects through which anarchist traditions and ideas were disseminated and promoted.

Yippie’s decision to run a candidate for Mayor of Vancouver in 1971 was a poignant illustration of how anarchist ideas were articulated through the medium of humorous public satire, utopian speculation, and deliberate absurdity. The Yippie candidate, known only in promotional materials as Zaria, openly framed her presence in the campaign as an opportunity to “ridicule with joy” the civic administration of the incumbent candidate, Tom Campbell. While Mayor Campbell had years of formal political experience, Zaria countered by touting her qualifications as a “person, woman, mother, welfare recipient, freak, ex-convict, [and] Yippie!” Appearing on her election pamphlet with a baby in one hand and a rifle in the other, she promised that a vote for her was a vote for liberation in the broadest sense, one that brought together themes of revolutionary fun, music, communalism, and anarchy, processes that were defined as integral to acquiring control over one’s own life. Moreover, Zaria promised that her electoral victory would mean a fundamental restructuring of both the city and the natural universe. The police, courts, jails, and pounds would be demolished. Schools would be turned over to students and businesses turned over to workers. Private automobile networks would be replaced with free public transit, including a fleet of free public bicycles. The concrete parking lots and many of the main thoroughfares of the city would be torn up and replaced with parks and playground equipment. Industry would be non-polluting, and the beaches would be cleansed of imposed civic authority and returned to the control of the community. All stores would be free stores, acting as distribution points

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<sup>101</sup> David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Bev Davies, interview with author, 7 February 2012; Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011.



for products constructed and grown in the city. Every resident would be guaranteed food, clothing, and shelter, and the city would open its arms to all manner of political dissidents, exiles, and war resisters. In addition, spaces in Zaria's election platform were consciously left blank so that the reader could insert their own particular concerns. Finally, the "law of gravity" would be repealed, and all the property and assets belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company would be expropriated and returned to Aboriginal communities.<sup>103</sup>

Zaria's campaign reflected a broad pattern of countercultural resistance to the intransigence and obstruction of city officials. It did so by creating an imagined future that mixed the impossible, the unlikely, and the entirely practical. While such an imaginary was clearly meant to be funny, its humour rested on a revolutionary logic and context that espoused anarchist ideas of direct democracy, community control, decentralized organization, mutual aid, and critiques of both capitalism and the state. Such ideas were to be found woven throughout the long history of anarchism, from the 19th and early 20th century ideas of anarchist communists and syndicalists who argued for the direct control of the community and the workplace, to the emerging work of mid-20th century anarchists such as Paul Goodman, Colin Ward, and Murray Bookchin who argued for a fundamental re-imagining of the human relationship to nature and the planning and organization of urban and rural space.<sup>104</sup> As a result, Zaria's campaign helps to highlight how the resurging anarchist politics of Vancouver in the 1970s was constructed through the activity of the local countercultural New Left, as well as through a broader array of anarchist ideas that spanned the 19th and 20th centuries.

If Yippie's emphasis on decentralized power and direct democracy were reflected in their ideas of an imagined Vancouver under a Yippie Mayor, then so too were they inscribed in the actual organization of the group. Its division into a series of decentralized collectives and project groups was a defining feature that separated Yippies off from

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<sup>103</sup> Northern Lunatic Fringe of the Youth International Party, "Vote Zaria," [n.d.], Yippie broadsheet, author's personal papers.

<sup>104</sup> Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchist Communism: Its Basics and Principles* (London: Freedom Press, 1900); Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: University of New York Press, 1972); Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London: A. Lane: The Penguin Press, 1972); Rudolf Rocker, *Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism* (London: Freedom Press, 1973); Paul and Percival Goodman, *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960); Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Bookchin, *Post-scarcity Anarchism*.

other aspects of the counterculture New Left, particularly the VLF. While both groups aimed to politicize cultural activities in order to help organize revolutionary activity, Vancouver Yippies drew a line between how the two groups organized their own personal activities. Where the VLF drew on established Leninist ideas of democratic centralism—which ensured that once the group decided on political ideas, they would be rigorously adhered to—Yippie embraced the concept of “decentralized democracy.”<sup>105</sup> Lacking any kind of rigorous approach to this concept, decentralized democracy was based on a loose set of political ideas that coalesced around notions of hierarchy, discipline, and the way in which the different segments of the group interacted and related to each other. Yippie steadfastly rejected the idea of leadership and the organized discipline that it associated with communist movements. Commenting on the construction of one of its own broadsheets, a number of Yippie authors remarked that, “[i]n case you’re wondering, this document is being written as its typed in the free, anarchistic Yippie! Way. Three of us are fighting over the typewriter.”<sup>106</sup> While the joke worked, in part, by parodying the idea of anarchism as disorganization, it also sought to re-inscribe in a casual way the idea that Yippie functioned through methods of free association, voluntarism, and a lack of institutionalized control over political work.

Finally, Yippie built its political and cultural projects by drawing on and expressing anarchist language, symbolism, and narratives of collective memory. The group’s broadsheets and pamphlets were particularly important for mixing anarchist symbols and arguments in ways that were both humorous and counterculturally relevant. Thus, one Yippie broadsheet defined its goals as a frontal assault on the sanctity of private property and the intrusion of restrictions on personal freedom in the areas of sexuality, speech, and consumption, while also reminding its readers that they ought to “smash the state,” a phrase that was a well-trod piece of anarchist rhetoric.<sup>107</sup> Yippie’s psychedelic picnics were described as a not-so-secret “Hippie/Yippie/Anarchist dope conspiracy,” while one of its “street sheets” that provided instruction on how to construct smoke and stink bombs, came adorned with an image of an anarchist saboteur. Perfectly encapsulating the hybridity of anarchism and the countercultural New Left, the

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<sup>105</sup> Youth International Party, “A Note at the Start,” 1.

<sup>106</sup> Youth International Party, “Yippie is Alive and Well in Vancouver!,” [n.d.], Yippie broadsheet, author’s personal papers.

<sup>107</sup> Youth International Party, “Yippie is Alive and Well in Vancouver!”

saboteur was drawn to resemble a mixture of Mikhail Bakunin and a psychedelic mushroom. Street sheets also provided a platform for the dissemination of historical and contemporary revolutionary propaganda. Here, excerpts from a 1970 Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) manifesto were paired with the words of the anarchist Buenaventura Durruti, famous for his participation in the Spanish Civil War. Mixing the FLQ's anti-colonial Marxism of 1970 with Durruti's revolutionary anarchism of 1936, the Yippie used a broad left memory to espouse the importance of direct action and revolutionary activity, even as it converted those revolutionary ideas to fit the specific objectives of a countercultural New Left.<sup>108</sup> A similar process of memory mixing was reflected in the *Yellow Journal's* May Day calendar. Beyond the celebration of the first of May as the international day of working-class resistance to capitalism, the calendar recreated May as a revolutionary month that was simultaneously a statement on the long history of revolutionary struggle and resistance. Nineteenth century anarchist events like the birth of Mikhail Bakunin and Louise Michel or the Haymarket bombing conspiracy and the Paris Commune were placed alongside a broader number of radical events such as the birth of Karl Marx, the expansion of British Chartism, the Winnipeg General Strike, and the Barcelona uprising of 1936. At the same time, it also placed these events next to the key cultural and political markers of the long sixties. Thus some of the most iconic moments and memories of the Old Left, both anarchist and non-anarchist, were mixed up with a commemoration of the Freedom Rides, the 1968 occupation of the Sorbonne, the life of Malcolm X, the trial of FLQ activist Pierre Vallières, and the release of the Rolling Stones' single, *Paint it Black*. In these ways Yippie wrapped itself in the garb of anarchist tradition, even as it modified and filtered anarchist ideas, symbols, and memory through the political and cultural frames the countercultural New Left.<sup>109</sup>

While a wide range of social commentators—historians, activists, and political partisans—have continually reframed the ways we have come to understand the sixties through a multitude of new directions, the period has retained an association with dramatic patterns of social transformation. The stories told about Canada's 1960s are a more recent addition to this global commentary, yet they too have reflected an orientation in which fundamental social, political, and cultural changes are at the centre

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<sup>108</sup> Youth International Party, "Revolutionary Street Sheet," no. 0 ([1971?]), author's personal papers.

<sup>109</sup> "May," *Yellow Journal* (23 April 1970), 19.

of historical narratives. A focus on the experience of activists in Vancouver during the late 1960s and early 1970s reflects much of this recent historiographical work by pointing to how the New Left was experienced in ways that were both profoundly inspirational and frustratingly limited. As a result, activists created new forms of political activity that blended the perspectives of the New Left, the counterculture, and an emerging anarchist politics. The Northern Lunatic Fringe was a reflection of this process, highlighting how a growing countercultural New Left shaped the contours of the city's local political life at the same time as it echoed a broader continental re-imagining of the connections between popular political and cultural activity.

After two years of such frenetic activity, Vancouver's Yippie collectives disbanded through a mixture of exhaustion, personal differences, and changing political priorities. Many of the activists who had worked with Yippie to help reshape the New Left and create a radical counterculture in Vancouver continued to be politically active. The next chapter follows those who took Yippie's initial engagement with anarchism and expanded it into a self-conscious anarchist community.

## Chapter 2

### **Crazy Dreams: Vancouver's Anarchist Resurgence and the Recreation of Social Revolution, 1972–1983**

The social ideas, experiments, and struggles of the Sixties have been more or less laid to rest, but the visions they represented have not disappeared. In the cynical Seventies friends have told us that only crazy people hold to the view that, “a new concert of human relations is being developed which must emerge, become conscious, and shared so that a revolution of form can be filled with a renaissance of compassion, awareness, and love.” Yet, this formulation of the Hip-culture, represents one example of the spirit, unity, and depth of conception which is necessary for any movement towards human freedom, solidarity, and social justice. Consequently, The Open Road is thronged with dreamers.

“Still Crazy After All These Years,” *Open Road* 1  
(1976)

In 1976, Vancouver's anarchist periodical, *Open Road*, introduced itself to the world by emphasizing a profound political-temporal schism in its first issue. On the one hand, *Open Road* was both a reflection of, and a direct response to, a global flowering of radical movements that stretched across the decade of the 1970s and into the 1980s. On the other hand, like activists across the world, the *Open Road* collective had not separated itself off politically, socially, or culturally from the experiences of the long sixties. At the same moment that anarchists were looking forward to a new set of revolutionary possibilities, they likewise continued to reflect on the meaning of their activity in the recent and far past, memories that were not kept quiet or quickly discarded but rather put to use in the service of struggle. This amalgamation of hope and anxiety over the contours of political change mixed with a desire to recover, rediscover, or maintain continuities with the past has profoundly shaped the history of anarchist activism, politics, and culture during the late twentieth century. If a history of the student and countercultural New Left demonstrated anarchism's initial reemergence during the long sixties, this chapter looks to how activists built upon and expanded those initial

forays over the course of the 1970s and into the early 1980s. It argues that, between 1972 and 1983, a collection of activists with an extensive background in social activism over the previous half decade turned to anarchism as a means of both continuing and transforming their commitment to revolutionary struggle. This was the starting point for Vancouver's anarchist resurgence, a period in which anarchist activism, politics, and culture solidified its place as a critical part of the city's political landscape.

To illustrate how and why these changes took place, this chapter explores a number of different anarchist projects including engagements with anarchist theory and forms of collective study, the development of an anarchist press, and initiatives that sought the organization and agitation of popular culture. With respect to the latter, the chapter demonstrates how anarchists in Vancouver created a series of strong political, personal, and cultural connections with the city's local punk scene. It argues that, in their attempts to merge political activism and popular culture, they maintained that punk and anarchism had much to offer one another. Specifically, they suggested that punk offered a critical tool for direct support for and solidarity with emerging social movements while connections to radical theory, social movements, and an older cadre of activists could enhance the utility, significance, and meaning of punk's cultural expression. In all, the chapter maintains that these projects of the anarchist resurgence—be they reading groups, new periodicals, or engagements with punk—were connected by a desire to recreate the purpose, organization, and meaning of revolutionary activity. Whereas earlier anarchist currents in Vancouver were rooted in the countercultural politics of liberation, anarchists in the 1970s and 1980s increasingly embraced the idea of social revolution, arguing that revolutionary changes in society would be best approached through the organization of popular forms of resistance and discontent. At the same time, a remarkable amount of continuity existed between the political assumptions and methods of the countercultural New Left of the long sixties and the anarchist resurgence that came in its wake. It was this dual political reality, which was set in the transformative context of the 1970s and 1980s, but also echoing lessons and principles from the past, which defined the crazy dreams of Vancouver anarchists.

If *Open Road* framed the resurgence of anarchist politics in Vancouver as part of a global process of left-wing experimentation, it is first critical to note that this activism also reflected a broader pattern of political dissent and social dissatisfaction at the local level. In British Columbia, the contours of these political struggles were inseparable from

the rise of the right-wing Social Credit Party, which ruled over the province's parliamentary landscape, nearly uninterrupted, from the early 1950s to the early 1990s. In doing so, Social Credit created a powerful political machine rooted in the expansion of the state and extensive support for capitalist development. As Ben Isitt notes, a cornerstone of the government's economic and political policies rested on a desire to exploit the "vast resource-rich hinterland Interior through government spending on transportation and energy infrastructure to ensure the easy flow of exportable commodities."<sup>110</sup> Bolstered by a high demand for the province's natural resources, these economic strategies resulted in a period of significant economic growth during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>111</sup>

Nevertheless, Social Credit was never able to secure a comprehensive victory over its adversaries, such as the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (later the New Democratic Party) and the labour movement. Unionization not only expanded under Social Credit tenure, but it also retained patterns of militant rank-and-file resistance.<sup>112</sup> This was particularly the case in the forest industry where, as Gordon Hak has illustrated, workers routinely acted outside of the boundaries set by government and union bureaucrats. Over the course of the late 1960s and early 1970s, these workers participated in a range of illegal and unsanctioned job actions—wildcat strikes—as a means of challenging the authority of company and union officials alike.<sup>113</sup> Working-class dissatisfaction also manifested itself in the creation of new and renewed forms of labour activism. Here, the formation in 1972 of the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union created innovative instances of socialist-feminist organizing while other radicals, including the IWW, continued to promote older socialist traditions.<sup>114</sup>

The postwar political climate was also shaped by environmental degradation caused by massive resource projects, a heightened awareness of pollution and toxicity, and the general fear of nuclear annihilation. By the mid-1970s, the province was home to

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<sup>110</sup> Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 28.

<sup>111</sup> Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 114.

<sup>112</sup> Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 116.

<sup>113</sup> Gordon Hak, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1934–1974* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 190.

<sup>114</sup> Julia Smith, "An 'Entirely Different' Kind of Union: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972–1986," *Labour/Le Travail* 73, no. 1 (2014): 23–65; Gambone, *Another View From Anarchist Mountain*, 177–180.

growing environmental organizations such as Greenpeace and the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control, as well as scores of smaller ad hoc citizen groups and temporary coalitions.<sup>115</sup> If the militarism of the Cold War shaped the environmental movement in British Columbia, it also ushered in new instances of war resistance and anti-imperialism. In particular, the aggression of the United States against Southeast Asia significantly reshaped the province. The arrival of thousands of American war resisters seeking temporary or permanent refuge in British Columbia energized the local anti-war movement.<sup>116</sup> While US foreign policy helped to radicalize local activists, so too did the violence of the Canadian state. Across the long sixties, an eclectic range of activists maintained that the oppression of Québécois and Aboriginal communities reflected a long-running pattern of Canadian colonial violence.<sup>117</sup>

While the 1970s and 1980s were a crucial period for social movement activism in the province, the decades were also characterized by growing patterns of economic disruption. A downturn in export markets, expanding unemployment, growth in bankruptcies, escalating inflation, and soaring global energy prices contributed to an unstable economic climate, both in British Columbia and around the world. Such developments reflected a global transformation in the organization of capitalism, and the economic, political, and social policies of nation-states including the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. As a result, the dominant economic ideology of the past several decades, Keynesianism—the desire for full employment, social support networks provided by a welfare state, and a robust system of collective bargaining—was increasingly contested.<sup>118</sup> In its place, corporate leaders, business advocates, and their government allies advocated for the turn toward neoliberal capitalism. In British

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<sup>115</sup> For two accounts on the history of Greenpeace, see John-Henry Harter, “Environmental Justice for Whom? Class, New Social Movements, and the Environment: A Case Study of Greenpeace Canada, 1971–2000,” *Labour/Le Travail* 54 (2004): 83–119; and Zelko, *Make It a Green Peace!* For an analysis of SPEC, see Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 168–174.

<sup>116</sup> Lara Campbell, “‘Women United Against the War’: Gender Politics, Feminism, and Vietnam Draft Resistance in Canada,” in *New World Coming*, 339–346; Kathleen Rodgers, *Welcome to Resisterville: American Dissidents in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

<sup>117</sup> “A Police State in Your Own Back Yard,” *Yellow Journal* (23 April 1970): 8; See also, Dominique Clément, “The October Crisis of 1970: Human Rights Abuses Under the War Measures Act,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’Etudes Canadiennes* 42, no. 2 (2008): 160–186.

<sup>118</sup> William Carroll and R. S. Ratner, “Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia,” *Critical Sociology* 16, no. 1 (1989): 29–53.



Columbia, the watershed moment for this neoliberal turn occurred during the early 1980s. Amidst unemployment rates that topped 14 per cent, interest rates that neared 20 per cent, rampant inflation, and widespread strike action, the Social Credit government initiated a series of measures that sought to reduce the power of the labour movement and curtail the scope of social and government programs.<sup>119</sup> Such activity was not deployed to reduce short-term government spending but instead was aimed at long-term neoliberal adjustments.<sup>120</sup> Over the summer and fall of 1983, a large and diverse bloc of opposition groups formed to contest these Social Credit policies. This was British Columbia's "Solidarity" movement, a loose collection of union and citizen groups that organized massive rallies and protests that called on the government to withdraw its assault on workers and social services. In the end, Solidarity failed to halt the province's emerging neoliberal turn, although it did serve as a powerful reminder of the potential for popular forms of extraparliamentary resistance.<sup>121</sup>

These broad political, social, and economic transformations, both at the global and local levels, shaped the experiences and expectations of Vancouver's anarchist resurgence. Growing first from the militancy of the long sixties, anarchist projects solidified during the second half of the 1970s and early 1980s, a period marked by expanding social movement activism, continued environmental transformation, and emerging instances of neoliberal economic restructuring. At the same time, the collapse of Vancouver Yippie, one of the most important initial incubators for the development of anarchist politics and culture, pushed activists to develop a more focused and informed range of anarchist initiatives.

One of the most avid supporters of this anarchist turn was David Spaner. An active member of Vancouver Yippie, Spaner maintained strong connections with American Yippie communities throughout the 1970s. After Vancouver Yippie ended as an active project, he traveled to New York in the early 1970s to write for Yippie's main periodical, the *Yipster Times*. Spaner argued that it was the lack of stable, effective, and motivating forms of political mobilization and organization that most constrained the work of revolutionaries in North America. The development of Yippie-inspired media

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<sup>119</sup> Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 149–50.

<sup>120</sup> Ted Richmond and John Shields, "Reflections on Resistance to Neoliberalism: Looking Back on Solidarity in 1983 British Columbia," *Socialist Studies* 7, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall, 2011): 218.

<sup>121</sup> Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 150–157.

spectacles was a perfect example of this. Although they could work well in highlighting specific political grievances and promoting militant cultures of resistance, on their own they often had no durable political utility. Unless the spectacle was connected to a well-organized base of community support, the event often resulted in an organizational dead-end. On the flip side, creating disciplined patterns of political organizing could also lead to the creation of isolated and cliquish collectives that would be incapable of mobilizing new supporters.<sup>122</sup>

Instead, Spaner argued that activists ought to use specific anarchist perspectives in order to overcome the challenges that had constrained the revolutionary potential of both the New Left and the counterculture. In this formulation, the methods of “anarchist consensus” took on a particularly important task. Here, Spaner defined the concept in ways that took it beyond its usual associations. More than the process through which general agreement was produced on a given subject, he argued that consensus encapsulated a range of objectives, assumptions, and meanings whose aim was to create a political process that was accountable, democratic, and methodologically consistent with the idea that revolutionary activity organized from the ground up. In this reading, consensus was described as a process that was able to accept and work with dissenting opinion, rather than forcing alternative perspectives to be voted down or marginalized through silence. He also argued that consensus was an important tool for creating a culture of collective responsibility in the completion of political work. Finally, because participation in consensus models were always voluntary, they reflected a form of consensual social relationships in which individuals related and interacted with the collective based only on their own free initiative and commitment.<sup>123</sup>

At the same time, anarchist consensus was more than a set of practices through which to organize the technical business of political work. It was also a means of creating new social dynamics and militant identities among activists. Through the communalism engrained in consensus politics, Spaner proposed that anarchist collectives could work to construct a broader pattern of empathetic social relationships among activists. Not only were such practices associated with creating anarchist patterns of revolutionary activity, but they were also understood to be the best methods

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<sup>122</sup> Mark Brothers (David Spaner) and Stanley Kowalski, “Yip Organizational Links—Without Chains,” in *Blacklisted News*, 535. Originally published in *The Yipster Times* (June 1973).

<sup>123</sup> Brothers (Spaner) and Kowalski, “Yip Organizational Links—Without Chains,” 536.

of working against the introduction of democratic centralism, which anarchists found to be politically counterproductive and culturally repugnant. In this sense, Spaner maintained that anarchism offered activists effective forms of organization while avoiding the “hierarchical discipline” that had characterized some New Left movements.<sup>124</sup>

Spaner was not the only activist associated with Vancouver’s countercultural New Left who turned to anarchism as a means of reorganizing the revolutionary politics of the long sixties. Many of his fellow Yippies, including Ken Lester, Bob Sarti, Larry Gambone, Scott Parker, Bob Mercer and others, turned their attention to developing a more cohesive and theoretically informed anarchist politics. While there had been a growing trend among some Vancouver Yippies to gain a more rigorous understanding of anarchist history, politics, and organizational methods, the demise of Yippie and the end of its frenetic activity created more time and space for this political contemplation to take place, as well as offering a sobering series of reflections on the limitations that had hindered past revolutionary ambitions.

On the earliest projects associated with this anarchist resurgence was the reading group, Defining Ourselves into Existence (DOE).<sup>125</sup> DOE was made up of an unspecified number of activists whose identities were never written down in the group’s position papers.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, their opening statement does provide some general information on the political, social, and economic backgrounds of its participants. Members came from an assortment of working and middle-class family backgrounds. All of them had experiences living in collective or communal dwellings and, while some had attended university, exposure to post-secondary learning was far from extensive. Politically, the group saw themselves as part of a broad revolutionary tradition that had developed over the previous half decade. Members had spent the late 1960s and early

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<sup>124</sup> Brothers (Spaner) and Kowalski, “Yip Organizational Links—Without Chains,” 536.

<sup>125</sup> Because the reading group did not have a formal name, I will use the title of the group’s founding position paper, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” to refer to the collective. This name, abbreviated to DOE, will also be used in the notes to signify the authorship of its unpublished works.

<sup>126</sup> Although DOE did not identify the members of the group, the Vancouver Yippie Ken Lester has subsequently noted that he participated in the creation of DOE. See Ken Lester, interview with author, 15 April 2011. While the group’s materials appear to be unpublished, there was an intention to disseminate their reading lists out into the community, with the provision that community members understood that it was designed in relation to the specific activist experiences of the collective’s members. See DOE, “Introduction to the Reading List,” (unpublished position paper, [n.d.]), 2, author’s personal papers.

1970s engaged in a wide array of political work, including anti-poverty struggles, union organizing, the creation of alternative media projects and revolutionary propaganda services, educational work with the city's Free University, student activism, the promotion and organization of co-operatives, legal defence initiatives, anti-war struggles, and environmental politics. Such activity had produced dozens of protests, demonstrations, guerrilla theatre actions, and sit-ins, as well as "lengthy legal hassles" and short terms of incarceration for all members of the group.<sup>127</sup>

From these experiences, members argued that the contemporary revolutionary movement, both in Vancouver and elsewhere in North America, suffered from two fundamental problems. The first was that activists still had not adequately developed modes of understanding what the collective called the "self-movement" of everyday people, a concept defined as the "individual and collective activity of human beings in which they produce and transform (transcend) the whole of their existence (i.e. labour, needs, classes, etc.)."<sup>128</sup> Second, activists had failed to adequately understand and put into place effective means of connecting the self-movement of the general population with the self-movement of an organized "revolutionary minority," activists who were already committed to the prospect of creating a fundamentally different set of social relationships through extraparlimentary action.<sup>129</sup> For DOE, there did not seem to be an appropriate theoretical framework that could help interpret and organize these patterns of popular and militant self-movement, something that the collective sought to rectify through collective study and discussion.

The decision to take up the prospect of theoretical work when there seemed to be so much of it circulating through radical communities may have seemed to some as a tragic waste of time and resources. DOE profoundly disagreed with this assessment, arguing not only for the need for new ideas, but also challenging the assumption that political theory and political organizing were opposed courses of action between which activists needed to choose. Instead, they maintained that practical forms of political organizing had to be related to sound assumptions and principles. Thus, while they argued that the practical political experience and activity of its members was valid and

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<sup>127</sup> DOE, "Defining Ourselves into Existence," (unpublished position paper, [n.d.]), 2-3, author's personal papers.

<sup>128</sup> DOE, "Defining Ourselves into Existence," 1.

<sup>129</sup> DOE, "Defining Ourselves into Existence," 2.

ought to continue, such activities would have to be “approached and executed in a qualitatively different way if they are to be part of the revolutionary changes we hope to see in our lives and in society at large.” Therefore, theory was “perfectly consistent with the notion of ‘practical work’ and essential to the development of revolution.”<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, DOE members maintained that there was still no body of effective ideas that could orientate themselves to the contemporary and local environment of modern industrial North America. Drawing on a wider current of dissent within the New Left, the collective understood the theoretical contributions of Leninism, Trotskyism, and Maoism as traditions marred by irrelevance, inappropriateness, or thinly veiled oppression, either because they were incapable of organizing mass levels of self-activity, or because they reflected social, regional, economic, and historical particularities that were incompatible with contemporary social life in North America.<sup>131</sup>

Therefore, what DOE sought were revolutionary traditions that could make sense of and engage the “multi-dimensional nature of oppression in this society and the multi-dimensional scope of the actual social movement which has emerged in North America during the past ten years.”<sup>132</sup> Anarchism offered the collective just such a tradition by providing two basic advantages. First, they understood it as radically pluralistic and capable of encompassing an expansive set of social actors, issues, and strategies. Second, it could organize this diversity in non-hierarchical ways. What this meant was that anarchism did not seek to privilege one form of oppression over another, or demand that certain activists would be in charge of or better suited to lead revolutionary transformations. As a result, the collective used anarchist critiques of authority and leadership to argue that

[n]ow more than ever revolutionaries must be aware of revolution as a deep socio-historical process involving the movement of millions of ordinary people. In the historically specific conditions of North America the organizations and activities of the revolutionary minority must aid and catalyze the popular self-activity, and not the other way around. Our primary loyalty must be to the social forms created by the revolutionary process itself, not to the political forms created by radicals.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> DOE, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” 1–3.

<sup>131</sup> DOE, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” 6.

<sup>132</sup> DOE, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” 8.

<sup>133</sup> DOE, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” 9.

DOE's argument that revolutionaries ought to support and radicalize popular activity, rather than create it, illustrated a growing emphasis upon anarchist revolutionary theory. In order to counter Leninist models of a professional revolutionary vanguard, the collective drew on the long-running anarchist notion of a social revolution. First articulated by the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, social revolution saw the role of militants as agents who would encourage popular forms of insurrection, rebellion, and social struggle without taking up the power of centralized leadership or bureaucratic control. Rather than the seizure of political power by a small revolutionary unit or party, social revolution was based on the "spontaneous and continuous actions of the masses," action that was directed to the creation of a new society "from the bottom up."<sup>134</sup> It was this emphasis on self-organization, participation, and the rejection of monopolizing the revolutionary process that separated anarchist approaches to revolution from much of the Marxist-Leninist left. At the same time, the collective's emphasis on the specific work of Bakunin and the process of social revolution was put into practice because it seemed to offer a framework that supported forms of activist politics that, while limited, were already in place. After all, attempts to catalyze popular self-movement as part of a wider program of revolutionary activism had been one of the central motivations of Vancouver's countercultural New Left. Therefore, what anarchism seemed to offer activists in Vancouver was not a fundamentally separate set of ideas, but a way of reframing and rethinking the methods of popular struggle.

To put this into practice, DOE engaged in an intensive study of the history, organizational form, and meaning of self-movement and revolutionary activity. They read widely, focusing on an ambitious collection of texts that included Hegel's perspective on dialectics, Marx's reformulation of Hegel, and a broad array of Marxist writing concerning history, revolution, notions of totality, base and superstructure, modes and relations of production, class, alienation, the production of commodities, private property, and the formation and meaning of the state. The collective also read works that emerged out of the Frankfurt School's critique of Marx, including those theoreticians who sought an amalgamation of Marx and Freud.<sup>135</sup> Members also sought to engage with an undefined set of works that would be able to "comprehend and explain the vast complexity of the

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<sup>134</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Ideas*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Graham (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 104–105.

<sup>135</sup> DOE, "Defining Ourselves into Existence," 4.

modern state, present-day imperialism, the new ecological dimension of revolutionary struggle, the position and transformation of women in advanced capitalist society, the development of the counter-culture and New Left, ethnic movements, and Canadian nationalism.”<sup>136</sup> Not surprisingly, given their support for social revolution, anarchist perspectives figured prominently in the DOE reading list. The collective explored the specific traditions of anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism, anarchist critiques of the state, Bakunin’s perspectives on class and national liberation movements, as well as more recent work by Murray Bookchin on the relationship between modern industrial life, anarchism, and ecology.<sup>137</sup>

Although the DOE collective did not have a particularly long life, they offer historians a number of important insights. The composition of the collective demonstrates how political veterans of the long sixties were a critical part of the anarchist resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s. As well, it demonstrates that that, like the city’s student and countercultural New Left, activists in the collective turned to anarchism in order to extend the spirit of liberation and revolution that they had encountered within the long sixties. In doing so, it also gives continuing credence to the notion that the influence of the New Left was highly uneven. In addition to its ability to inspire, it also produced deep patterns of dissatisfaction, patterns that pushed a growing number of activists to shift the focus, organization, and meaning of revolutionary activity in new directions.

While the work of David Spaner and new collectives like DOE signalled a growing emphasis on anarchism as a serious revolutionary alternative, it was the second half of the 1970s that most definitively marked the arrival of a tangible and vibrant anarchist presence within the city’s political landscape. The remainder of this chapter addresses two manifestations of this anarchist resurgence. First, it looks to the creation of the anarchist press. While these publishing endeavours furthered the discussion of anarchist ideas and political theory both within and beyond the city, the chapter also maintains that anarchist periodicals were more than simply the material representation of language. Rather, anarchist papers also operated as important political spaces that had wide-reaching effects on the formation, sociability, and political composition of the local

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<sup>136</sup> DOE, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” 4–5.

<sup>137</sup> DOE, “Defining Ourselves into Existence,” 4; “A Unified Study Program,” (unpublished position paper, [n.d.]), 1, author’s personal papers.

anarchist community in Vancouver. The second and final section of this chapter returns to the process of creating new forms of anarchist activity through the close association between politics and culture. Here, the chapter argues that the integration of a small number of anarchists into the city's budding punk scene demonstrated how ideas of social revolution were being applied at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, while at the same time demonstrating past patterns of radical activity. In this sense, it demonstrates that the politics of social revolution can offer new insights into the legacy of the long sixties and its relationship to the radicalism of the 1970s and 1980s.

The formation of *Open Road* in 1976, an internationally focused and disseminated anarchist news journal based out of Vancouver, instigated the city's best-known, public, and lasting anarchist project. However, *Open Road* was more than a conduit for activist news and anarchist analysis; it also became an important setting in which anarchist politics took place. It helped to instigate new anarchist projects, and connected anarchists in Vancouver into globally arranged radical nexus. As a result, it was *Open Road's* ability to function as a physical place, a collective of people organized into various social relationships, a network for anarchist communication, and an exchanged object, that made it important for the anarchist resurgence in Vancouver.

Like many of the city's earliest anarchist projects of the 1970s, the initial *Open Road* collective constituted activists who had lived and worked together under the auspices of the Northern Lunatic Fringe, and included Yippies such as Bob Sarti, Ken Lester, David Spaner, Bob Mercer, and others. In addition to a range of social, cultural, and political connections, the majority of the collective's early members also had an extensive amount of shared experience working as journalists in a range of mainstream and underground papers including the *Yellow Journal*, *Georgia Straight*, *Yipster Times*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Terminal City Express*, *Vancouver Magazine*, and other publications. This meant that the collective was well-versed in journalistic forms of writing and news gathering, and also familiar with the production and layout skills that transformed individual chunks of text and images into a unified periodical. Likewise, they understood how to solicit subscriptions and written work, and how to create and maintain the distribution networks that disseminated the paper once it was printed.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Ken Lester, interview with author, 15 April 2011; Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011.



Experience working as journalists helped immeasurably in the organization of the paper, yet it was their political and cultural experiences as activists at the end of the long sixties that provided the foundation for the formation of *Open Road* in the first place. Like *Defining Ourselves*, *Open Road* developed as an attempt to amplify and interpret the global expansion of social movement activism during the 1970s, while at the same time using that growing awareness to promote anarchist forms of revolutionary struggle. As part of this process, *Open Road* developed extensive coverage of anarchist politics around the world.<sup>139</sup> In this sense, the paper not only provides historians with an important glimpse into the transnational expansion of anarchist projects, but it also demonstrates the methods through which local anarchists in Vancouver both interpreted and shaped that pattern of global anarchist activity. To do so, *Open Road* attempted to cover the broadest possible scope of anarchist activity. The paper covered the hosting of international anarchist conferences, meetings and events, such as those held in Venice and New York in 1976 to mark the centenary of Bakunin's death and the more regularly scheduled gatherings of North American anarchist groups such as the Socialist Revolutionary Anarchist Federation.<sup>140</sup> Readers could also look forward to a diverse array of stories on the work of contemporary anarchists collectives, including the pieing campaigns waged by Vancouver's Anarchist Party of Canada (Groucho-Marxist),<sup>141</sup> the cultural performances of New York's The Living Theatre collective,<sup>142</sup> the working-class activism of American Wobblies<sup>143</sup> and Spanish anarcho-syndicalists,<sup>144</sup> or the development of anarchist street demonstrations in Greece.<sup>145</sup> The paper also attempted to foster a growing familiarity with anarchist theory and history by covering the work of

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<sup>139</sup> "Still crazy after all these years," *Open Road* 1 (Summer 1976): 3.

<sup>140</sup> "Cultivating the 'Habit of Freedom'" *Open Road* 2 (Spring 1977): 2; "News from Nowhere," *Open Road* 3 (Summer 1977): 8; Earl Averill, "SARF Conference, Anarchists Take New Track," *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 14.

<sup>141</sup> "Braincutters stymied by pastry politics," *Open Road* 2 (Spring 1977): 4; Martin Van Lubin, "White Like Me': Piepeople Find Cleaver," *Open Road* 3 (Summer 1977): 4; Pie Traynor, "The Creaming of America," *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 7; Mark Brothers "Fly, Fly (North) American Pie," *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 4.

<sup>142</sup> "Living Theatre Busted," *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 1.

<sup>143</sup> Frank Everett, "Wobblies Clogify System," *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 4.

<sup>144</sup> "Happy Birthday CNT!," *Open Road* 6 (Spring 1978): 3.

<sup>145</sup> "Anarchism Outlawed in Greece," *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 4.

well-known writers such as Murray Bookchin and George Woodcock.<sup>146</sup> In addition, the collective continually published lists of anarchist reading materials, as well as the contact information for different anarchist collectives and projects in the United States and Canada. Published over the course of two issues, the collective's "Little Black Book" listed of names and addresses for 291 anarchist and anti-authoritarian collectives spread out across Canada and the United States, 32 of which were north of the border. The vast majority of the Canadian collectives were concentrated in British Columbia and Ontario (11 collectives each), followed by lower numbers in Quebec (6), Alberta (2), and Saskatchewan (2). By way of comparison, the most numerous concentrations in the United States were in California (37) and New York (35). The collective never defined what counted as anarchist and anti-authoritarian, although they argued that the common feature that linked the two categories together was a focus on revolutionary aspirations organized through anti-hierarchical methods and approaches.<sup>147</sup>

The vagueness that surrounded these definitional boundaries was, in many ways, symptomatic of the collective's refusal to pigeonhole the broad anarchist tradition. Despite the fact that Vancouver's anarchist resurgence was intimately tied up with the exploration of political theory, the *Open Road* collective steadfastly refused to subscribe to a codified or consistent set of anarchist perspectives. Instead, the collective saw its particular role as amplifying existing forms of popular radicalism in order push anarchists into a productive conversation with an emerging set of social movements, a political orientation that required an open and flexible anarchist terrain. Like the DOE collective, this desire was motivated by the belief that the social movements of the previous decade had run aground on the shoals of sectarianism, arcane dogma, bureaucracy, and centralization. Despite these political blunders, the *Open Road* collective saw the 1970s as awash with political potential. Standing in the middle of the decade, the collective saw itself as part of a global pattern of struggles in which "people are rejecting sectarian and authoritarian methods of organization in favor of full rank-and-file participation and

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<sup>146</sup> Mark Brothers, "Anarchy is Liberty, No Disorder," *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 15; Murray Bookchin, "Challenging the Icons of Anarchism," *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 16 and 19; George Woodcock, "Marie-Louise Berneri: A Recollection," *Open Road* 6 (Spring 1978): 14; Perry Shearwood, "Durrutti Between the Covers," *Open Road* 6 (Spring 1978): 18.

<sup>147</sup> The regular "Books Received" and "News From Nowhere" columns were good examples of how the collective used the paper to promote a range of anarchist reading materials and the personal contact information of different anarchist groups and projects. For *Open Road*'s Little Black Book, see *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 17.

direction. In many instances people have taken the initiative and successfully overruled their 'leadership' to occupy positions far to the Left of what is 'acceptable.'"<sup>148</sup>

The collective defined these developments as an organic rebuke of the overly ideological Marxist-Leninist left, a way of slapping back the "dead hand of centralist vanguard organizations which have hindered and confused serious organizing possibilities over the past few years." At the same time, the notion of an organic rebellion of social movement activism seemed to point towards new modes of revolutionary potential, patterns of radicalism that were defined not only by the topics of oppression they sought to resist, but also by the methods of their struggle. At the core of this evaluation, *Open Road* saw the expanding social movements of the 1970s as a pattern of political activity through which "ordinary everyday people" were organizing "in their own interests, without the need for Supermen, political bosses, or self-appointed vanguards." In this sense, the diversity of extraparlimentary activism and militancy in the feminist, gay and lesbian, environmental, labour, Aboriginal, prison abolition, anti-imperialist, co-operative, and anti-capitalist movements of the 1970s demonstrated to the collective that "social revolution was not only desirable, but possible."<sup>149</sup>

In addition to being a manifestation of anarchist ideas, *Open Road* was also a collective of people who met regularly in a rented office space near the corner of West Hastings and Cambie, located on the border between the city's affluent downtown core, and the socially and economically marginalized eastside. The physical location of the paper's office and the social, political, and cultural relationships of its members created an important political space that nurtured and sustained the expansion of anarchist politics in the city. Initiated by anarchists from the countercultural New Left, the journal's increasing popularity in the years after 1976 meant that the collective and its office was soon home to a growing number of new members and fellow travelers. Some of these activists came from the political community in Vancouver and its surrounding communities while others migrated to the city in order to participate in the city's anarchist resurgence. In this sense, the channels through which the periodical traveled and the place at which it was organized and produced facilitated the expansion of anarchist politics in Vancouver.

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<sup>148</sup> "Still Crazy After All These Years," *Open Road* 1 (1976): 3.

<sup>149</sup> "Still Crazy After All These Years," 3.

Originally from Victoria, Brent Taylor spent much of 1975–76 moving between different leftist communities in California and Ontario before a copy of *Open Road* he discovered in Toronto pulled him back to the west coast. Arriving in Vancouver in 1976, the *Open Road* office was the first place that Taylor sought out in order to make connections with radicals in the city. Soon, he was writing articles for the paper, living in collective houses with other local anarchists, and participating in new anarchist activities including the Anarchist Party of Canada (Groucho-Marxist), various prison abolition projects, anti-nuclear organizing, as well as a slew of graffiti actions and minor acts of sabotage.<sup>150</sup> Jim Campbell and Jill Bend, two anarchists based out of the Kitchener-Waterloo area, and Alan Zisman, a New Jersey anarchist who had moved to Montreal to attend university and avoid being drafted, also cited *Open Road* as an important factor in their decision to move into Vancouver's anarchist scene. All four newcomers became regular parts of the city's local anarchist projects, including the Anarchist Party of Canada. While Bend and Campbell delved deeply into prison abolition politics, Zisman threw himself into work with Spartacus Books as well as playing with Ad Hoc, a group of musicians that performed in support of different social movement activities and political events in the city.<sup>151</sup> Marian Lydbrooke, an anarchist and feminist living in the United Kingdom, likewise remembers the journal as a factor in her decision to relocate from East London to Vancouver. Living in a series of squats in Hackney, she experienced the journal as something interesting to read, but also as something meaningful to look at, citing the way that she would come across the journal's colourful posters pasted on the walls of different communal living spaces. After a chance meeting with Jill Bend at a rally in London, Lydbrooke was soon ensconced in Vancouver where she began playing in a number of all-women punk bands, joined the *Open Road* collective and a series of other anarchist projects, and began living with a number of activists connected to the paper, including the artist Dave Lester who created many of the posters she had seen on the walls of London's squats.<sup>152</sup> As the experiences of Campbell, Bend, Taylor, Lydbrooke, and Zisman demonstrate, *Open Road* created a influential hub from which the city's growing anarchist collectives, organizations, and activists could interact and expand into new directions.

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<sup>150</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>151</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012; Alan Zisman, interview with author, 3 February 2012; Jim Campbell, "Fifteen Years of Bulldozer and More: The Personal, the Political, and a Few of the Connections," *Bulldozer/Prison News Service* 49 (January-February 1995).

<sup>152</sup> Brooke (Marion) Lydbrooke, interview with author, 3 June 2012.

However, conflict and debate played as much a role as cooperation in the growing diversity of the anarchist resurgence. This was true of an expanding anarchist-feminist presence within the *Open Road*.<sup>153</sup> In addition to demonstrating how the paper fostered new ideological currents within the city's anarchist community, the work of anarchist-feminists also illustrates how the anarchist press operated as a physical site for anarchist debates over the politics of organization and work process. These debates reflect how *Open Road's* politics were not only embedded in print, but also rooted in the daily life of the paper's production.

Although the addition of new members into the *Open Road* collective helped to expand the size and diversity of the anarchist community in Vancouver, it also ushered in new forms of political debate as well as social and cultural tensions. The shared personal and political experience of the original *Open Road* members was critical in creating the paper, but others also interpreted them as the basis of emerging cliques. Underlying much of this division was the fact that many of the new members of the collective lacked the technical expertise held by colleagues who had worked in different media environments for much of the previous decade. Personal differences combined with an uneven distribution of specialized skills to produce a collective culture that limited the creation of an open and participatory environment. As a result, new members often quickly left the collective and internal divisions grew among those that remained.<sup>154</sup>

For example, one of the most pressing conflicts that emerged in the wake of the collective's expansion revolved around the nature and organization of work. Here, one perspective emphasized the efficient production of the paper based on collective control mixed with individual responsibility for specific tasks. Contesting this approach, other members argued that, while the output and quality of the paper was important, work ought to be more than a means to an end. These critics proposed that the process of putting out the paper ought to operate as a "school in which each individual (recent arrival or old hand) can learn all aspects of the process—that skill level or aptitude is only relative and can be compensated for by a healthy collective process."<sup>155</sup> Such differences were often articulated along gendered lines in which a "male' production

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<sup>153</sup> Anarchist-feminist, anarcho-feminist, and anarcha-feminist were all common ways of labeling the merging of anarchism and feminism.

<sup>154</sup> "Still crazy after all these years—cont.," *Open Road* 10 ½ (Fall/Winter 1979): 4.

<sup>155</sup> "Still crazy after all these years—cont.," 4.

orientation,” or “male burn-out work-styles” were set against “‘female’ group process.” In order to strengthen this last approach, a group of roughly eight anarchist-feminists came together in the summer of 1979 to produce the paper’s first anarchist-feminist issue, *Open Road* #10. In framing their project, the women set three general objectives: to learn a greater set of writing, editorial, and production skills, to contribute to the on-going cross-fertilization between feminism and anarchism and anarchism and feminism, and to “produce the first widely distributed international anarchy-feminist paper.”<sup>156</sup>

Anarchist-feminism was not a new topic for the journal. The earliest issues of the paper covered the work of local anarchist-feminist groups such as Revolting Women and printed letters from a number of anarchist and radical feminist groups that called on the collective to do more to promote a discussion of the topic. Responding to these requests, *Open Road* published a series of pieces on the relationship between anarchism and feminism including an essay by Helen Ellenbogen on the failures of male anarchists to extend their anti-authoritarianism into the realm of gender, a short letter reflecting on the presence of anarchist-feminism in Australia, and an exploration of anarchist and anti-authoritarian themes in the writing of feminist science-fiction authors such as Ursula Le Guin.<sup>157</sup>

As more anarchist-feminists joined *Open Road*, women in the collective pushed the collective to transform the way that it operated. The collective reorganized work processes so that “brain work” and “shit work” were shared more equally, and put into place a system of skill rotation and collective education. As a result, each part of the production process was worked by at least two people so that the more experienced member could pass along their skills to their colleagues. The decision to create *Open Road* #10 was a part of this process of reorganization and internal experimentation that sought to “emphasize a feminist perspective in the paper and to enable new women to learn some of the necessary skills involved away from a potentially intimidating male environment.”<sup>158</sup> All eight of the women involved in the anarchy-feminist issue

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<sup>156</sup> “On the Road,” *Open Road* 10 (Summer 1979): 3. The journal’s recurring column, “On the Road,” provided readers with commentary on the activities of the collective.

<sup>157</sup> Helene Ellenbogen, “Feminism: The Anarchist Impulse Comes Alive,” *Open Road* 4 (Fall, 1977): 8 and 13; “Roadside Notes,” *Open Road* 7 (Summer 1978): 2; Lessa, Takver, and Alex, “Daily Life in Utopia: Feminism, Anarchism, and Science Fiction,” *Open Road* 7 (Summer 1978): 8–9; “Roadside Notes,” *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978), 2.

<sup>158</sup> Leeder, “Anarchy-Feminism: Moving Together,” 10.

contributed to the planning, writing, editing, and layout of the paper. The only exception was the children's page, where children contributed the stories and pictures while an adult handled the layout.<sup>159</sup>

The experience of putting out *Open Road* #10 was clearly rewarding in many ways, but it was also difficult, stressful, and sometimes fell short of the goals that the women set for themselves. This was particularly true in the collective's attempts to use consensus decision-making. For example, in the context of anarchism's longstanding support for atheism, a proposed article on spirituality ate up hours of the collective's time and energy, and created an environment that was divisive and "painful." As a new collective, finding processes that worked for everyone was either difficult or impossible given the time constraints of publication deadlines. As a result, a number of members quit the project before it was finished.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, *Open Road* #10 still achieved a number of important gains for the general collective. Anarchist-feminists demonstrated that there was "nothing sacred about the basic [*Open Road*] collective." In this way, the very presence of the special issue demonstrated that anyone could produce the paper. The popularity of the issue also drew in new members to the collective. And finally, while *Open Road* #10 did not enact a seamless performance of participatory organization, the general collective, in its subsequent work, applied "consciousness around process." As a result, the collective began organizing its meetings around a number of process-checks that sought to institutionalize open communication and dialogue. Each meeting started with a "weather report" that allowed members to understand in advance who was "tired, ill, depressed or even super-high so that we can better understand and deal with each other's responses to everything from planning a fundraising picnic to cleaning up the office." Meetings closed with sessions where people could discuss how they felt the meeting had gone. In addition, the collective placed more emphasis on skill sharing, education, and a demystification of institutionalized knowledge in order to work against oppressive and divisive power-dynamics.<sup>161</sup>

While *Open Road* was calling for a global connection between anarchists and emerging social movements, Vancouver anarchists were also putting this into practice at

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<sup>159</sup> "On the Road," *Open Road*, 10 (Summer 1979), 3.

<sup>160</sup> "On the Road," *Open Road*, 10 (Summer 1979), 3; "Still crazy after all these years—cont," 4–5.

<sup>161</sup> "Still crazy after all these years—cont," 4–5.

the local level. The arrival in 1978 of a new anarchist media project, *British Columbia's Blackout* (*Blackout*), was critical in this regard. Developed by the Yippie anarchist and *Open Road* member Bob Sarti, *Blackout* was a locally focused anarchist newssheet. In addition to providing space for anarchist criticism and news, *Blackout* also covered a considerable array of local cultural, social, and artistic events, placing information on upcoming protests, demonstrations, meetings, and political trials along side advertisements for art shows, films, lectures and talks, radio broadcasts, plays, poetry readings, festivals, musical performances, and dances.<sup>162</sup>

*Blackout's* emphasis on cultural activity represented a wider current of activist opinion in the city. Anarchists continually promoted and organized a wide array of popular cultural activities because they saw everyday forms of cultural life an essential form of political activity, both because it could support the development of different political projects, and because developing radical forms of recreation, leisure, and entertainment were essential in developing alterative forms of culture that were both meaningful and militant. Anarchist views on the city's burgeoning punk scene highlighted these connections between politics and culture. Anarchists in Vancouver engaged with punk during the 1970s and 1980s because they saw it as awash with the potential to bridge different generations of political dissent, to promote and support emerging activist projects, and to help usher in new expressions of radical culture in the city and beyond.

If social revolution encompassed the process through which everyday forms of conflict and tension could form the basis of wider political transformations, then punk was a particularly apt phenomenon with which to engage. Beginning in the early 1970s, "punk rock" was intimately tied up with a jumbled set of perceptions and concerns over the past, present, and future state of rock and roll. At the centre of punk's relationship with rock were a series of conflicts that hinged upon categories of musicality, performance, and sound, but also upon the social meanings that rock produced and reflected. As George Lipsitz has argued, a central aspect of rock and roll's early social purchase came from its emotional and poignant critiques of work, social oppression, and middle-class respectability.<sup>163</sup> However, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the idea that rock and roll was a meaningful expression of dissent increasingly rang hollow. Instead,

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<sup>162</sup> "What's On," *British Columbia's Blackout* 7 (2–16 October 1979): 4.

<sup>163</sup> See George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labour and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).



critics alleged that rock's soul had been broken on the wheel of superstardom, corporate money, and influential record labels, processes that had produced a frustrating contradiction. On the one hand, capitalist structures had amplified and extended the reach of rock and roll, bringing it into the lives and senses of millions of people. On the other hand, that success had turned rock into a focus of contempt for those who no longer saw it as a relevant and engaged form of social expression. As a result, rock and roll was ripe for a dramatic transformation.<sup>164</sup>

To this end, music critics agitated for a program of rehabilitation by emphasizing a return to certain aspects of genre's past: psychedelia, a rawness and simplicity of form, and amateur performance. Critics imbued these musical forms and practices with the ability to transform rock back into something great, a transformation they increasingly referred to as "punk." This rehabilitation, however, did not happen. Instead, punk and rock grew further apart. By the mid-1970s, the definition of punk had changed from a loose collection of ideas about what rock ought to be to a style that was, in Steven Waksman's words, "young, aggressive, and cynical, with music that marked a return to basics yet pushed those basic elements in extreme directions."<sup>165</sup>

The earliest recorded albums associated with the global expansion of punk—those by the Ramones, the Damned, and the Sex Pistols—were released over the course of 1976. By the following year, Vancouver was host to a small flowering of punk bands. In the spring of 1977, a local group, the Furies, played the city's first public punk performance at an art gallery in Gastown. At the end of July, a large crowd attended a show at the Japanese Hall on the east side of downtown to see a bill that included both the Furies and the Dishrags. Following a brief lull, the period between 1978 and 1979 saw an explosion of groups, including Tunnel Canary, I Braineater, the Generators, the K-Tels/Young Canadians, Active Dog, D.O.A., the Subhumans, the Modernettes, the Visitors, the Pointed Sticks, the Rabid, and many more. The sounds that came from this collection of bands were diverse, leading to a range of contested subcategories, the

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<sup>164</sup> Steve Waksman, *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 50–57. The connection to, and alienation from, rock is a dominant theme in the telling of punk history. In addition to Waksman, see Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002).

<sup>165</sup> Waksman, *This Ain't the Summer of Love*, 107.

most common of which were “pop bands,” “art bands,” and “hardcore bands.” From this base of young performers sprang a loose and unstable network—a punk scene—made up of bands and audiences, organized public and private performances, and self-produced records. Punk places also emerged, such as houses, apartments, record stores, rehearsal spaces, and a shifting set of venues, as well as the streets and alleys of the city itself.<sup>166</sup> With this diversity in mind, it is important not to reify punk into something unified, static, or stable. Brian Goble, who played in both D.O.A. and the Subhumans, noted that the scene was built around “little microcosms. There really wasn’t much unity in that sense. It was united enough, in a sense, that it produced social gatherings where anyone was welcome, but the bands themselves weren’t really united together.”<sup>167</sup> In this sense, it is more useful to see punk in Vancouver as a series of shifting relationships, sounds, places, practices, and material cultures, all of which change depending on time and place, but reflect certain shared experiences and common interests.

The social, political, cultural, and environmental transformations of the long sixties shaped Vancouver’s emerging punk scene, just as it had shaped the anarchist

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<sup>166</sup> *Snot Rag*, one of the city’s earliest punk zines, provides an excellent window into the details of the scene’s development over the late 1970s. In particular, see “Interview with the Skulls,” *Snot Rag* 2 (November 1977): 2–5; “Interview with the Furies,” *Snot Rag* 3 (December 1977): 3; “Canadian New Wave,” *Snot Rag* 3 (December 1977): 5; “Interview with Victorian Pork,” *Snot Rag* 5 (January 1978): 3–6; “Editorial,” *Snot Rag* 9 (May 1978): 0; “Punks in the Park,” *Snot Rag* 10 (July 1978): 8–10; “Band Sum Ups” *Snot Rag* 13 (November 1978): 20–24. Most of the historical work on the city’s punk scene has come from its participants. For two of the most well-known pieces of autobiographical writing on the Vancouver scene, see Joe Keithley, *I, Shithead: A Life in Punk* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2003); and John Armstrong, *Guilty of Everything* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2001). Susan Tabata’s documentary film *Bloodied But Unbowed*, along with its accompanying website, provides extensive commentary on the origins and development of the scene’s early years. See Susan Tabata, *Bloodied But Unbowed: Early Vancouver Punk* (Tabata Productions/Knowledge Network, 2011), DVD. For the film’s accompanying website, see [www.thepunkmovie.com](http://www.thepunkmovie.com). The photographer and artist Bev Davies has constantly worked to capture and document the scene’s development. For a sampling of her work, see “Bev Davies Photo Essay,” parts 1–4, posted under the “webisodes” section of the *Bloodied But Unbowed* website, [thepunkmovie.com/webisodes](http://thepunkmovie.com/webisodes). Vancouver also looms large in the writing of Sam Sutherland, one of the few authors to have written a national history of punk in Canada. See Sam Sutherland, *Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2012). Through fiction and biography, Chris Walter has also contributed significantly to the telling of punk history in Canada, both on the west coast and elsewhere. For a small sampling of his work, see Chris Walter, *I Was a Punk Before You Were a Punk* (Vancouver: GFY Press, 2003); *Boozecan* (Vancouver: GFY Press, 2004); *Argh Fuck Kill: The Story of the DayGlo Abortions* (Vancouver: GFY Press, 2010); *SNFU: What No One Else Wanted to Say* (Vancouver: GFY Press, 2012).

<sup>167</sup> Brian Goble, interview with author, 8 March 2012.

resurgence. Born at the end of the 1950s into a working-class home, Goble experienced Vietnam and the lingering threat of nuclear war through the glass screen of his parent's television set. At the same time, experiences with local events were also important. Alongside his future band mates Joe Keithley and Gerry Hannah, Goble lived in North Burnaby, an area just south of Burrard Inlet and close to Burnaby Mountain and Simon Fraser University. Like other areas of greater Vancouver, patterns of suburbanization and residential construction during the 1960s and 1970s created dramatic changes in Goble's immediate environment. Relishing stands of woods and pockets of bush, he watched in dismay as these "beautiful open spaces" were gradually "covered with houses."<sup>168</sup> Keithley was also deeply marked by the violence of Vietnam and the struggles of the anti-war and civil rights movements. Growing up in a working-class family with strong ties to the labour movement, he initially planned to become a lawyer like his childhood hero William Kunstler, the famed American civil rights attorney. Keithley, however, never became a lawyer. Instead, he pursued his political activism through music, an impulse that he shared with Goble, Gerry Hannah, and a range of others who would help to build the first wave of the city's punk scene.<sup>169</sup>

If the experiences of the long sixties were crucial to many in Vancouver's emerging punk scene, then so too was the shifting political and economic climate of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As members of the Rabid explained in an interview with *Public Enemy* in 1979, punk in Vancouver was inextricably shaped by the expanding economic crisis. Angered and exasperated after eighteen months of unemployment, one of the group's members defined punk by connecting it to a desire for social change. "We want to change things. Canada is in a mess. They're sitting there letting it all go by, like degenerates. Canada is a mess. It's like the 1930s."<sup>170</sup> The Subhumans expressed similar anxieties the year before in their iconic punk anthem, "Oh Canaduh." Here, the song's lyrics, composed by Gerry Hannah and sung by Brian Goble, explored a host of social problems facing the nation:

Every new day the dollar goes down  
The sea's getting blacker, the sky's turning brown  
You ain't got no job, you can't pay the rent

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<sup>168</sup> Brian Goble, interview with author, 8 March 2012.

<sup>169</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, 19–22.

<sup>170</sup> "Interview with the Rabid," *Public Enemy* 3 (February 1979): 3.

And now you're paying interest on all the money you've been lent

Oh Canaduh

What's wrong with you

You better wake up

Now what you gonna do

The big companies are milking us dry

Our corporation nation is soon gonna die

And in the capital they're sipping their tea

They care about their paycheques but not about you and me<sup>171</sup>

Tying together the themes of environmental degradation, poverty, economic exploitation, and governmental neglect, "Oh Canaduh" reflected the ways in which punk was shaped by, and attempted to resist, the early moments of neoliberalism and the politics of austerity in British Columbia.

Anarchists, in Vancouver and elsewhere, witnessed and encouraged the expansion of punk for a number of reasons. Culturally, there were elements within punk's global explosion that sounded familiar to anarchist ears. Among the more notable developments was the release of the Sex Pistol's *Anarchy in the U.K.*, a highly successful album whose global dissemination spat anarchist language out around the world. On the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific, activists argued that despite the album's stereotypical association between anarchism, chaos, and dystopia, *Anarchy in the U.K.* still worked to reference anarchism as a political tradition and, perhaps more importantly, held out the tantalizing hope that popular music and militant political practices might once again be forged into a useful revolutionary relationship. In England, this led to a very close association between anarchism and punk, so much so that explicit forms of hybridization produced a vibrant collection of anarcho-punk bands such as Crass, Conflict, Amebix, and others.<sup>172</sup> For Crass's Penny Rimbaud, the political significance of the Sex Pistols did not hinge on their philosophical sophistication as

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<sup>171</sup> The Subhumans, "Oh, Canaduh," *Death to the Sickoids* (Vancouver: self-released album, 1978), 45rpm single.

<sup>172</sup> See Ian Glasper, *The Day The Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk, 1980–1984* (London: Cherry Red Books, 2006); Brian Cogan, "Do They Owe Us a Living? Of Course They Do!" Crass, Throbbing Gristle, and Anarchy and Radicalism in Early English Punk Rock," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1, no. 2 (2008): 77–90; Rich Cross, "'There is No Authority But Yourself': The Individual and the Collective in British Anarcho-Punk," *Music and Politics* 2 (Summer 2010), 1–20; Rich Cross "The Hippies Now Wear Black: Crass and the Anarcho-Punk Movement, 1977–84," *Socialist History* 26 (2004): 25–44; George Berger, *The Story of Crass* (Oakland: PM Press, 2009).

much as on their ability to inspire new ideas. When Pistols' vocalist Johnny Rotten remarked that there was "no future" in the current world, Rimbaud and his fellow anarchists saw it "as a challenge to our creativity—we knew that there was a future if we were prepared to work for it."<sup>173</sup>

Back in Vancouver, the Yippie anarchist Ken Lester experienced the Sex Pistols in a very similar way. Finding the band's commitment to serious political activism more than a little lacking, he was nevertheless awed by their ability to inspire new forms of creative political discussion. The band's 1977 single "Holidays in the Sun" was an acute example of this, with the album cover designed as a parody of a travel brochure. Here, tourists frolic in a range of seemingly exotic locations and activities. As they go about their leisure, they sing refrains from the album's lyrics, calling on the viewer to enjoy a "cheap holiday in other people's misery."<sup>174</sup> For Lester, these artistic expressions were valuable despite the political limitations of the band's individual members. As he explained in an interview, "I think these things were really effective because they were poetic, artistic statements that people could refer to, or would even subconsciously remain with people."<sup>175</sup> Moreover, the Pistols' more direct claims to anarchist identity, no matter how tenuous they might have been, did not hurt the growing association between punk and anarchism. For Brent Taylor, a central participant in many of Vancouver's anarchist formations, including the Anarchist Party of Canada (Groucho-Marxist) and the Direct Action collective, the Sex Pistols' songs "made the whole difference, like every anarchist in the whole world is going to pay attention to punk at least to some degree because of *Anarchy in the U.K.*"<sup>176</sup>

Although the Pistols were critical in amplifying the connections between anarchism and punk, anarchists in Vancouver engaged with punk because it also made sense to them based on their own experiences. In this sense, nothing was as important as the established perspective that popular cultural activities could be both an important site and method for political struggle. Two of the earliest anarchists to engage with punk

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<sup>173</sup> Penny Rimbaud, *The Last of the Hippies: An Hysterical Romance*. This short essay was originally included as an insert in Crass's 1982 self-produced E.P., *Christ – The Album*.

<sup>174</sup> The Sex Pistols, *Holidays in the Sun* (London: Virgin Records, 1977), 45rpm single.

<sup>175</sup> Ken Lester, interview with author, 15 April 2011.

<sup>176</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

for these reasons were Jill Bend and Brent Taylor. Close friends and political colleagues, they began attending punk shows regularly after 1977.

For Taylor, punk clearly and aggressively radiated what he saw as a “rebel culture” that reflected a legitimate sense of rage, anger, betrayal, and despair operating within youth communities at the end of 1970s.<sup>177</sup> Central to this milieu was punk’s tense relationship with the city’s established rock and roll community. Like in many early punk scenes across North America, punk bands in Vancouver lacked access to the cultural, economic, technological, and spatial resources that supported other rock and roll musicians in the community.<sup>178</sup> Generally speaking, the attention that most rock promoters offered to the emerging punk scene oscillated between non-existent and overtly hostile. Radio station producers and disc jockeys continually refused to play punk records on the radio, and established music venues closed their doors to those bands that wanted to organize punk performances.<sup>179</sup> As a result, punk bands developed their own methods of cultural organization through a mixture of alternative venues, recording and distribution processes, and media.<sup>180</sup> It was this cultural conflict and the development of alternative structures that anarchists such as Taylor found exciting and inspiring. Punk seemed to confirm the existence of an emerging cultural rebellion rooted in the experiences of the mid-to-late 1970s, but recognizable to older radicals—an

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<sup>177</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>178</sup> See Sutherland, *Perfect Youth*, 194–213.

<sup>179</sup> For examples of punk’s conflict with Vancouver’s wider musical community, see “Editorial,” *Snot Rag* 9 (May 1978): 0; “Editorial,” *Snot Rag* 16 (March 1979): 0; “Lucas Gets Creamed,” *Vacant Lot* 1 (January–February 1979): 2; “Let Lucas Rot,” 2 *Public Enemy* (January 1979): 6; “Interview with the Rabid,” *Public Enemy* 3 (February 1979): 3; “State of the art!” *Public Enemy* 4 (March 1979): 10–11; Eric Von Schlippen, “Radio is Cleaning Up the Nation,” 5 *Public Enemy* (1979): 10.

<sup>180</sup> Keithley, *I, Shithead*, 49–52. While a heavy dose of contempt and neglect characterized punk’s relationship with much of the rock scene, young punks were not entirely on their own. Sympathetic vendors such as Quintessence Records stocked the latest imported and domestic punk records and developed a short-lived record label that released a number of albums featuring Vancouver punk groups. The store also operated as an important social space where those interested in punk could peruse through the vinyl, chat with the clerks about the newest releases, or check the notice boards for upcoming shows. In addition to Quintessence, punk bands also received a good measure of support from local cable television programs *The Vancouver Show* and *Nite Dreems*, both of which used broadcasting mediums to help disseminate early punk music videos, live performances, and interviews. Video interviews with individuals connected to Quintessence and *Nite Dreems* can be accessed through the “webisodes” section of *Bloodied But Unbowed* website. See [www.thepunkmovie.com/webisodes](http://www.thepunkmovie.com/webisodes).

interpretation that could be highly meaningful to multiple generations of social revolutionaries in search of popular radicalism.

Nevertheless, that radicalism was also potentially dangerous. Among leftists, the fear that punk could easily slide into unhinged individualism, or even white supremacy, was pervasive. Reflecting this concern, *Open Road* proposed that punk could indeed be a powerful social force. In particular, it pointed out the hypocrisies, failures, and betrayals of modernity in the bluntest of terms, while also incorporating these criticisms into a new youth culture that “exhibit[s] the most extreme loathing of the system and the vacuous creature comforts it offers its loyal accomplices.” However, as it pointed out, the “obvious danger in unrestrained hostility is that the resolution to such emotional intensity is not necessarily progressive.” Anti-authoritarian themes were clearly present within many North American punk communities, yet “the frustrated psychological state they reflect in their fans can just as easily be the raw material of organized fascism as any indication of a more progressive trend in contemporary youth culture.” For *Open Road*, a mixture of demography and experience explained this political situation. Here, it argued that the general age of punk’s constituents—youth between 14 and 22—meant that they were isolated from the “social and political experiences of the Sixties.”<sup>181</sup> The result was that punk had become, to a certain extent, an indeterminate and ambiguous force whose political meaning and culture were still very much up for grabs. Therefore, *Open Road* pushed its colleagues in the North American anarchist movement to engage with punk to channel and amplify its rebellion into an explicit revolutionary force. The alternative, it maintained, could be disastrous since a pattern of activist neglect or disinterest could “leave the field open to reactionary ideologies or general barbarism.”<sup>182</sup> In this way, punk’s political and cultural ambiguities spoke volumes about activist concerns over the legacy of the long sixties and the challenges of organizing across generational divisions.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> “Razor Rhythms Cut Coredome,” *Open Road* 14 (1982): 14.

<sup>182</sup> “Razor Rhythms Cut Coredome,” *Open Road* 14 (1982): 14.

<sup>183</sup> These were not abstract fears. As Sam Sutherland has demonstrated, violence could play a prominent role in shaping punk performances, social gatherings, and culture. See Sam Sutherland, *Perfect Youth*, 32–40. As James Ward has illustrated, punk had, from its opening salvos, a complicated relationship with the ideas and symbols of the far right. See James J. Ward, “‘This is Germany! It’s 1933’: Appropriations and Constructions of ‘Fascism’ in New York Punk/Hardcore in the 1980s,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 30, no. 3 (1996): 155–184. See also, Timothy Scott Brown, “Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and ‘Nazi Rock’ in

In this sense, Vancouver punk was never in any danger of being left alone by the left. Indeed, in some instances, punk and anarchism existed side by side under the same roof. This was particularly the case for a number of all-women communal houses on the east side of the city. Jill Bend, a regular resident of these places, recalled the houses brought together a range of radical left-wing currents, including anarchist, feminist, separatist, prison abolitionist, and environmentalist politics. They were also home to a number of punk musicians and provided rehearsal space to several all-women bands, including the Zellots, the Moral Lepers, and Industrial Waste Banned.<sup>184</sup> Anarchists also worked as managers for local bands. Ken Lester managed D.O.A., while David Spaner managed the Subhumans. For the most part, however, anarchism's relationship with punk in these years was most clearly visible in the public realm, as activists attempted to agitate, organize, and integrate punk into a host of radical political contexts. This chapter concludes by exploring two facets of this anarchist engagement. The first involves activists' attempts to create shared forms of identity between the emerging punk scene and an older array of progressive cultural and political traditions while the second includes forms of community organizing in which activists sought to integrate punk into the social movements in the city. Together, these tactics formed the basis through which anarchists attempted to organize punk both as a meaningful form of cultural expression and as an accessible and intergenerational expression of social revolutionary politics.

Anarchists in Vancouver understood that punk's precarious political existence was rooted in its physical separation from the social unrest and political activism experienced by previous generations. In light of this, it made good sense to them to try to bridge that gap by emphasizing shared patterns of political identity. In order to do so, historical narratives were particularly important tools in anarchists' efforts to make sense of punk and specifically to connect it to an older radical culture. Writing the pages of the anarchist punk press, for example, Larry Gambone, another participant in the city's Yippie and anarchist formations, created a historical narrative that sought to provide

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England and Germany," *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 157–178. For a broader treatment of leftwing engagements with punk, see Matthew Worley, "Shot By Both Sides: Punk, Politics and the End of 'Consensus,'" *Contemporary British History* 26, no. 3 (2012): 333–354; and Evan Smith, "When the Party Comes Down: The CPGB and Youth Culture, 1976–1991," *Twentieth Century Communism* 4, no. 4 (2012): 38–75.

<sup>184</sup> Jill Bend, interviews with author, 28 February 2012, 22 March 2012, and 3 October 2012.



punk with a new genealogy. He maintained that punk was a manifestation of a much older spirit of youth revolt and rebellious creativity that stretched back into the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>185</sup>

Gambone's reading suggested that the historical origins of punk lay in the work of poets such as the Marquis De Sade, who spoke strongly against the idea of established authority and morality, while other writers such as Percy Bysshe Shelly, Arthur Rimbaud, and Comte de Lautrémont had taken these aspects of rebellion and connected them to anarchism and other forms of collective struggle. Gambone also focused on the activity of self-identified anarchists such as Bakunin and Ravachol as well as 19th century bohemians, particularly those artists, writers, and cultural dissidents who joined in the European rebellions of 1848. Finally, it was the surrealist movements of the early 20th century that provided him with a bridge to the late 1970s. Instituting a range of radical artistic spectacles, the surrealist projects of the 1920s and 1930s developed a fundamental critique of modernist thinking and capitalist rationality. While such movements had fallen into obscurity by the 1950s and 1960s, Gambone argued that punk revived the spirit of those past projects. Instead of focusing on the great differences generated by space, time, and historical context, he aimed to highlight a shared pattern of cultural rebellion and political militancy. Nineteenth century European bohemians strongly reflected these connections, radicals that Gambone defined as the "first anti-establishment youth sub-culture."<sup>186</sup> In this interpretation, the bohemians initiated a radical family genealogy that led to the production of the Beats, the counterculture, and eventually punk. Such a narrative not only defined punk as a fundamentally radical activity, but it also redefined countercultural behaviour and the politicization of artistic production as historically grounded phenomena.

While Gambone traced what he saw as the long-term historical roots of punk, David Spaner also sought to situate punk in a longer trajectory of radical culture and politics. Spaner, however, reiterated a more common perspective that punk was an

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<sup>185</sup> Larry Gambone, "19<sup>th</sup> Century Punks: A Blast from the Past," *Vacant Lot 1* (January-February 1979): 8–9.

<sup>186</sup> Gambone, "19<sup>th</sup> Century Punks: A Blast from the Past," 8–9. For additional commentary on the relationship between anarchism and surrealism, see Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Allan Antliff, *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1998).

elaboration and extension of countercultural youth movements that developed in the years after the Second World War. In this evaluation, the radicalism of punk culture had its historical origins in the Beat musicians, artists, and poets of the 1950s. Like punk, the Beats had developed as a reaction to the perceived social and cultural stagnation of their immediate surroundings, a context that led to creation of a new autonomous culture. In this historical genealogy, such movements provided the basis for the “freak culture” of the mid-to-late sixties. According to Spaner, “the Hippies had many of the Beatniks’ values but they weren’t just a few small scenes in dead times. Their times were alive and the Hippies became a massive cultural upheaval that affected the entire society with their music, underground newspapers, marijuana, communalism, dress and hair, co-ops, festivals, [and] protests” as well as radical organizations such as Yippie and the Weather Underground.<sup>187</sup> For Spaner, punk’s place in the 1970s was part of this historical continuum that reached back to countercultural New Left and the Beats.

Such narratives served several purposes for Vancouver anarchists looking to connect to, and shape, the emerging punk movement in the 1970s and 1980s. For one, they sought to provide punk with an older and richer sense of itself, both in the present and in the past. In this view, if punk was not alone—if it had cultural relatives in the form of older radicals—then the possibilities for collaboration might be expanded. Moreover, for activists such as Gambone and Spaner, an awareness of such “family” relations might help to keep punk anchored within the political and cultural contours of the left. At the same time, as a new form of rebellion, punk was also meaningful to the political and cultural identities of older activists. In this sense, Gambone and Spaner’s histories were attempts to explain and make sense of punk in ways that buttressed their own histories and experiences. As the cultural “parents” of a new generation of militants, they could take pride not only in their children but also in themselves. This political genealogy was another example of how anarchists attempted to use a variety of different methods and mediums to politicize, agitate, and organize punk by connecting it to older forms of cultural dissent. In other words, in drawing such connections between past and present, these anarchists hoped to influence radical culture and politics into the future.

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<sup>187</sup> Jim Stark (David Spaner), “Beats, Hips, Yips, & Punks,” *Vacant Lot* 1 (January–February 1979): 10.

In addition to writing about punk, anarchists also worked directly with punk bands. The first manifestation of this relationship was at the Anarchist Mayday Carnival held in Stanley Park in 1978. Like the radical festivals and parties put on by Yippie and the VLF in the early 1970s, the May Day Carnival brought together different bands and musical acts—including punk—with games, crafts, food, and various forms of political discussion.<sup>188</sup> Two months after May Day, activists associated with the Anarchist Party of Canada (APC)—including Ken Lester, David Spaner, and Brent Taylor—created a more definitive punk event by throwing a lively anti-Canada Day punk concert on 1 July 1978, with performances by local bands the Subhumans, D.O.A., and Private School. Activists with the APC helped to organize the logistics of the show, including providing a stage, a generator, as well as promoting the event. At the same time, they also sought to overtly connect the music of punk with the politics of anarchism. Posters for the show included a collage in which images of some of the band members sat next to images of anarchist As, black flags, and masked protestors, while quotations from Bakunin were mixed among slogans that condemned nuclear proliferation, defined nationalism as a social sickness spread by governments, and called for the smashing of the state and the disarming of “rapists, fascists, and racists.” Participants at the performance also enacted rituals of political dissent, with APC activists burning legal tender and the Canadian flag, while the black banners of anarchy flew proudly for all to see.<sup>189</sup>

In addition to agitating and amplifying the cultural radicalism of punk, anarchists also sought to mobilize and connect the emerging punk scene with the city’s social movements. To do so, activists such as Ken Lester, David Spaner, Brent Taylor, Jill Bend, and others worked with local punk bands to develop a series of “Rock Against” concerts and performances that offered a moment of recreation and cultural enjoyment while also crafting forms of solidarity and support with specific political movements and projects. These initiatives drew on local and transnational activist experiences developed on both sides of the Atlantic since the late 1960s. On the one hand, the specific

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<sup>188</sup> Melanie Conn, interview with author, 18 May 2011; David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011.

<sup>189</sup> “Anarchy in Canada? Canada Day Punk Concert,” poster, 1978, Handbills, Ken Lester Collection (unsorted materials), Rare Books and Special Collections, Simon Fraser University (RBSC, SFU); David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012; Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012. The concert was also filmed, and selections of the footage are reproduced in Tabata’s film, *Bloodied But Unbowed*.

language of “rocking against” a given social injustice drew inspiration from the Rock Against Racism movement (RAR) in the UK. Created in 1976, it used the social and cultural connections of popular music to fight against the growing political status of the British right.<sup>190</sup> On the other hand, local activists, particularly those who had experiences organizing with countercultural New Left formations such as Yippie and the Vancouver Liberation Front, filtered these recent developments through nearly a decade of work fusing together popular culture and political struggles in Vancouver.

The growth of specific Rock Against concerts in Vancouver emerged out of a large RAR festival held in Chicago’s Lincoln Park in 1979, an event organized by a contingent of Yippies based out of New York City. Spaner, who had heard about the Lincoln Park concert while at a Yippie conference in New York earlier in the year, arranged for the Vancouver punk group D.O.A. to be on the list of artists performing in Chicago. To help raise money to pay for the trip, anarchists and punks organized the first Rock Against show at the Smiling Buddha Cabaret, a small rundown bar on the east side of downtown.<sup>191</sup>

In the wake of the shows at the Buddha and Lincoln Park, Vancouver anarchists were quick to expand the Rock Against model into other political areas.<sup>192</sup> In September of 1979, activists organized a large outdoor punk and reggae concert in Vancouver’s Vanier Park, billing it as a Rock Against Radiation event. In addition to reflecting general anxieties about the prospect of global annihilation, the concert was also an attempt to provide specific forms of support to local anti-nuclear projects such as the Pacific Life Community. Drawing together activists from southern British Columbia and Washington State, the Pacific Life Community was a leading force in the struggle against nuclear

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<sup>190</sup> Paul Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2002); Ian Goodyer, *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); David Widgery, *Beating Time* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986).

<sup>191</sup> David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Bev Davies, interview with author, 7 February 2012. For leaflets and handbills for the Rock Against Racism benefit in Vancouver, see Handbills, Ken Lester Collection (unsorted materials), RBSC, SFU.

<sup>192</sup> While anarchists were central to developing Rock Against concerts, they neither monopolized nor attempted to control the phenomenon. As a result, the punk scene was more than capable of hosting Rock Against events in which anarchists were not involved. Moreover, as the Rock Against Radiation event demonstrated, the musicality of the events was not confined to punk performances alone. Therefore, while punk, anarchism, and Rock Against concerts shared much, it would be a mistake to assume that they were always connected.

weapons on the west coast, particularly the development and deployment of Trident nuclear submarines.<sup>193</sup> Likewise, Bend and Taylor decided to hold a Rock Against Prisons show at the Ukrainian Hall in July of 1979 in order to raise awareness over the brutal conditions that inmates faced inside Canadian prisons. Organizers of the 1981 Rock Against Reagan concert at the Teamsters Hall positioned the performance as a benefit for militants and revolutionaries in El Salvador and among North America's indigenous communities, two groups who suffered particularly harsh treatment at the hands of American imperialism.<sup>194</sup> In order to communicate the political themes of the event, organizers ensured that musical performances also included some form of oral commentary on the given political theme, and set up tables and booths to disseminate radical literature and political information.<sup>195</sup>

Conceptually, anarchists understood the Rock Against shows as an attempt to bridge the social and cultural dynamics of the local punk scene with the political life of contemporary social movements.<sup>196</sup> At the same time, punk performances also provided an important basis of material support to many of the city's social movements. Shows that supported particular political events and campaigns offered activists publicity and public exposure, not only through the performance itself but also through leaflets and posters that organizers disseminated throughout the city in advance of the event. Musical performances associated with Rock Against and other "benefit shows" generated financial resources for community-based political projects, many of which were entirely dependent on voluntary donations. This was certainly true for Jill Bend and her colleagues in the prison abolition movement who used these punk performances as the primary source of funding for projects such as Prison Justice Day, the Native Prisoner Support Group, and Women Against Prisons.<sup>197</sup>

Anarchists also used benefit shows to help offset the cost of expensive legal bills and court fees of specific political trials. When well-known anti-prison activists Betsy

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<sup>193</sup> David Spaner, interview with author, 14 September 2011; Bev Davies, interview with author, 7 February 2012.

<sup>194</sup> For information on the Rock Against Prisons and Rock Against Reagan shows, see Handbills, Ken Lester Collection (unsorted materials), RBSC, SFU.

<sup>195</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 26 March 2012; Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Ken Lester, "Rock Against Racism: Rebel Music," *Public Enemy* 6 (May 1979): 7–8.

<sup>197</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012.

Wood and Gay Hoon were charged with attempting to abet the escape of prisoners at the BC Penitentiary in 1978, Jill Bend, Marian Lydbrooke, Bob Sarti, Ken Lester, and other Vancouver anarchists worked to develop various forms of community support for the two imprisoned activists, including a series of benefit concerts.<sup>198</sup> For Lydbrooke, who played in both The Visitors and the Moral Lepers, performing benefit shows for activists such as Gay and Hoon was one of the main ways of connecting her musical and political interests into a meaningful form of participation that muddled the line between punk as a cultural activity and as a form of political activism, solidarity, and support.<sup>199</sup>

Similarly, when Taylor, Hansen, Stewart, Belmas, and Hannah were arrested in the winter of 1983, segments of the punk community worked together to publicize the need for a fair trial and to help generate funds for their legal defence. Of the five activists that were charged, three—Taylor, Hannah, and Belmas—had strong connections to the city’s local punk community. Taylor, as already noted, was a staunch supporter of punk while Hannah and Belmas were both punk musicians in their own right. In light of their arrest, their friends and colleagues organized for the production and sale of an “emergency” punk record, *Right to be Wild*. This record featured D.O.A., who performed their anti-prison track “Burn it down” as well as a cover of the Subhumans’ iconic anthem “Fuck you” – a song that had been written by Gerry Hannah when he was a member of the band. Like the oral commentaries that accompanied Rock Against shows, *Right to Be Wild* also came with two written documents that served to elaborate on the cause and the underlying political beliefs of the benefit album: an introduction to the politics of the trial by David Spaner, and a letter from Gerry Hannah, who was incarcerated in Oakalla prison and awaiting the forthcoming trial of the “Vancouver Five.”<sup>200</sup> Taken as a whole, the album was one of the clearest examples of the political, cultural, and social merging of punk and anarchist scenes in Vancouver. As a form of musical expression,

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<sup>198</sup> Marian Lydbrooke, interview with author, 3 June 2012; Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012; Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011.

<sup>199</sup> Marian Lydbrooke, interview with author, 3 June 2012. The connections between punk and prison politics would continue in the years to come. The following year, Lydbrooke and the Visitors joined with local punk group the K-Tels to perform live at Matsqui prison as gesture of solidarity. See Marian X (Lydbrooke), “About Playing Prisons...” *Public Enemy* 6 (May 1979): 3. For a review of the Matsqui show by one of the inmates who helped to organize the performance, see Brian Boyko, “Live at Matsqui Prison,” *Public Enemy* 6 (May 1979): 3.

<sup>200</sup> D.O.A., *Right to be Wild* (Vancouver: Sudden Death Records, 1983), 45rpm single.

an act of solidarity and material support, and as an instance of political communication, *Right to be Wild* demonstrated the long-standing process through which activists in the city had developed strategies that effectively blurred the boundary between political and cultural activity.

Through Rock Against benefit shows, and benefit albums such as *Right to be Wild*, activists within Vancouver's anarchist scene attempted to shape and radicalize what they saw as the political rebellion of punk in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They did so not only by claiming long genealogies of cultural politics in the anarchist press; they also organized events and albums that aimed specifically to connect punk—and its audiences—to various social movements and activist currents in the city. As the Rock Against Prisons show demonstrated, this process connected punk to anarchism in two overlapping ways. Not only did anarchists organize shows, they also connected those performances with activist projects in which anarchists played a major role. Punk organizers such as Lester, Bend, and Taylor were heavily involved in anti-prison projects that drew in a broader array of anarchists. The organization of Prison Justice Day, alongside specific legal support work for the trial of Betsy Wood and Gay Hoon, the trials against American Indian Movement activists Leonard Peltier, and Dino and Gary Butler, involved activists connected to the city's various anarchist collectives and their specific interests in punk.<sup>201</sup> In this way, anarchists attempted to radicalize punk by creating events that were both culturally and politically meaningful while simultaneously trying to use cultural events as part of a broader approach to community organizing and social movement activism that could bridge supposedly distinct generations of culture and politics in Vancouver.

The motivations pushing an activist engagement with punk reflected a much broader pattern in which anarchism developed in tandem and direct conversation with the expansion of new social and cultural movements during the 1970s and early 1980s. The increasing prominence of anarchist ideas on the form and meaning of revolution and the politics of organization reflected the changes that had taken place over the course of the decade. From a loose jumble of anarchist ideas and influences, activists created a self-conscious anarchist community based in an overlapping set of projects, spaces, and

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<sup>201</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 26 March 2012.

shared ideas. Although this chapter used Vancouver as a consistent geographical setting, it also argued that the social, political, and cultural contexts that influenced the growth of anarchist activism were, in various ways, tied to the transformations taking place in activist communities across North America and Europe as well as being inseparable from the memory and experience of the long sixties. While the expansion of anarchist politics in Vancouver was based on a diverse array of interests, as highlighted by the experiences of anarchist-feminists in the *Open Road* collective, the search for social revolutionary strategies provided an important set of shared political and cultural perspectives. The following chapter considers a more contentious perspective by looking to the politics and culture of armed struggle, a nebulous and controversial set of ideas and practices that sought to augment social revolutionary tactics with more physical forms of clandestine resistance.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Learning to be Guerrillas: Anarchism, Armed Struggle, and the Transnational Origins of the Direct Action Collective**

Generally, activists involved with Vancouver Yippie, the anarchist press, and the integration of anarchists into a growing number of social movements and cultural initiatives planned their political work in ways that were open to the public. Even illegal actions, such as the Blaine Invasion or the Grasstown Smoke-in took place within the full view of the surrounding community. Patently illegal, they nevertheless functioned as an expression of aboveground political activity. To those anarchists committed to the politics of social revolution, such methods made a great deal of sense since they spoke to a desire for self-organization and collective control, values they believed the general population shared. At the same time, there were anarchists in the community who increasingly called for more aggressive forms of action, methods that pointed towards clandestine and surreptitious forms of political activism.

This chapter explores this latter current by looking at the organization and early experiences of the Direct Action collective. Consisting of Ann Hansen, Brent Taylor, Doug Stewart, Gerry Hannah, and Juliet Belmas, Direct Action fought against the expansion of industrial energy projects in British Columbia and the nuclear weapons industry in Ontario with two high-profile bombings conducted over the spring and fall of 1982. Shortly before their arrest in January 1983, Hansen and Belmas joined with seven other radical feminists to organize a series of fire-bombings against pornography outlets in greater Vancouver, acts of sabotage they claimed under the name the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. For both groups, these actions were part of a process of armed struggle; a term that encompasses not only acts of sabotage, but also associated illegal actions, including armed robbery. While the collective rejected the presumption held by other

guerrilla groups that armed struggle was the most important form of political activism, they nevertheless maintained that such actions could play a constructive role in the fight against capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, and ecological degradation. To do so, they carried out a program of sabotage that sought to achieve two primary objectives. First, they understood sabotage as a practical and effective means of political resistance. In physically attacking the infrastructure of different projects, Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade aimed to contest the growth and application of social systems seen to be abhorrent, oppressive, and dangerous. In this sense, the collective promoted sabotage as a physical attack to destroy property. This definition of sabotage differed from older approaches developed by the labour movement. Rather than drawing on working-class ideas of sabotage, which sought industrial disruption through strikes and other forms of reducing productivity on the job, Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade were part of a culture of left-wing armed struggle whose roots lay in the guerrilla movements of the long sixties.<sup>202</sup> Second, Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade also designed their armed actions as moments of militant communication and symbolic critique. Here, armed struggle operated as a form of propaganda that highlighted particular grievances, told certain stories, and attempted to inspire other activists to broaden the scope of resistance. Therefore, armed struggle was not only a political tactic, but also a cultural phenomenon whose theorization and practice allows historians to unpack and explore the political ideas and culture of revolutionary movements, actors, and tendencies.

While chapters 4, 5, and 6, look to the specific details, motivations, and anxieties surrounding Direct Action's contestation of industrial modernism and capitalist militarism, as well as the Wimmin's Fire Brigade's resistance to patriarchal violence, this chapter concerns itself with Direct Action's initial formation. In particular, it traces the reasons why the collective turned towards the politics of armed struggle by focusing on Hansen and Taylor's involvement with guerrilla groups in North America and Western Europe. It argues that Taylor's political travels to the San Francisco Bay Area and Hansen's militant sojourn to Paris provided powerful forms of political inspiration. The meaningfulness of these radical encounters, however, was also shaped by the political

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<sup>202</sup> During the twentieth century, the IWW was crucial in promoting discussions and practices of industrial sabotage. For an extensive discussion on the topic, see Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *Sabotage: The Conscious Withdrawal of the Workers Industrial Efficiency* (Cleveland, OH: IWW Publications Bureau, 1916); and Leier, *Rebel Life*, 25–28.

experiences of life in Canada. In this sense, both Hansen and Taylor learned to be guerrillas by moving through a multiplicity of political environments, both at home and abroad. As a result, the chapter further demonstrates how the resurgence of anarchist activism in Vancouver was predicated on patterns of transnational political exchange and personal mobility.

In addition to explaining the origins and impact of this militant turn, the chapter also focuses on how Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart began the process of preparing for the underground, activity that was based on a range of intersecting illegal actions including fraud, theft, and armed robbery. It argues that any attempt to understand the history of urban guerrilla groups requires that these patterns of illegality be understood as highly political acts and an inseparable part of revolutionary practice. To do so, the chapter focuses on how the relatively mundane criminal activity of the Direct Action collective created an environment that fostered the accumulation of militant resources and the learning of revolutionary skills. These developments in turn facilitated the construction of an underground infrastructure, a base upon which the practices of sabotage and clandestine living would later be erected.

More broadly, the chapter contributes to a diverse historiographical conversation on the militant meanings and spatial organization of post-war opposition movements. It draws on a growing body of historical work that approaches armed struggle not only as a style of action, but also as a loose set of revolutionary ideas and cultural orientations. To this end, the first half of the chapter begins by situating Vancouver activists into a wide pattern of debate over the nature and meaning of armed struggle activity from the early 1970s to the 1980s. While this narrative helps to contextualize and compare the perspectives of Direct Action to an earlier pattern of revolutionary activity, it also serves to broaden the scope of armed struggle's impact on the radical left. It argues that while only a small fraction of the left practiced armed struggle in the conventional sense, many more activists, both in Vancouver and elsewhere, were drawn into debates over its interpretation, meaning, and relevance.

Although the politics and culture of armed struggle was an important part of the city's anarchist resurgence beginning in the second half of the 1970s, debates over the organization and meaning of the phenomena were not without precedent. On the contrary, the emergence of armed anti-colonial and revolutionary movements in Latin

and North America, Asia, and Africa during the 1950s and 1960s were decisive in initiating local discussion over armed struggle as a meaningful, relevant, and promising form of political action. Given the social stakes of these struggles, it is perhaps unsurprising that historical debates over this wider revolutionary context remain highly charged and continually tied to the contested meanings of the long sixties. As Dan Berger has noted, liberal and conservative critics of the decade have often interpreted the expansion of leftwing political violence in the United States as a transition point that marked the end of a “good sixties,” defined by democratic reform, and the arrival a “bad sixties,” which raised the spectre of violent revolutionary calamities.<sup>203</sup> Against these limited narratives, other historians have taken up new approaches to expand our understanding of the significance and meaning of armed revolutionary activity.

To do so, they have expanded the geographical, ideological, and tactical scope of armed left-wing groups. While the usual list of militant characters, such as the American Indian Movement (AIM), the Black Panther Party, the Weather Underground, and the FLQ continue to garner scholarly attention, historians have also looked elsewhere to consider a wider range of radical movements that intersected with, or ran parallel to, the more well-known groups.<sup>204</sup> Daniel Burton-Rose’s work on the George Jackson Brigade, for example, has brought to light the activities of over half a dozen guerrilla groups that operated in California during the mid 1970s.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, the author places the treatment of armed struggle groups into a wider pattern of left-wing bombings and acts of sabotage that occurred frequently throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing from alternative press records, Burton-Rose notes that there were 1,391 such attacks in the United States between 1965 and 1970, while less conservative estimates by the US

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<sup>203</sup> Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 7–11.

<sup>204</sup> Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*; Dan Berger with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Struggle is for Land! Race, Territory, and National Liberation,” in *The Hidden 1970s*, 57–76; Scott Rutherford, “Canada’s Other Red Scare: The Anicinabe Park Occupation and Indigenous Decolonization,” in *The Hidden 1970s*, 77–96; Christopher B. Strain, “The Deacons for Defence and Justice,” in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, ed. J. L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 13–42; Akinyele O. Umoja, “The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” in *Blackpower in the Belly of the Beast*, 224–251; Meg Star, “Hit Them Harder: Leadership, Solidarity, and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement,” in *The Hidden 1970s*, 135–154; Diane C. Fujino, *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

<sup>205</sup> Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*, 37.

Treasury Department cite figures as high as 5,000 for the same period.<sup>206</sup> In highlighting the diversities of armed struggle in the United States, these narratives have helped to explain the existence of political violence not as an isolated or incoherent spasm of New Left rage, but rather as part of a larger pattern of global resistance and left-wing militancy that characterized the radical left across the 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s.

While these historical narratives have been critical in expanding our understanding of the geographical reach of armed struggle, this chapter draws particular inspiration from those histories that re-situate specific militant groups into a broader array of cultural and transnational contexts. For example, Jeremy Varon's work on the Weather Underground and the Red Army Faction (RAF) has been critical in pushing historians to consider the symbolic and cultural importance of political violence as conceptual phenomena. In highlighting how "being militant" was a critical factor of New Left existence, Varon has demonstrated how young revolutionaries "invested militant action with special power to enlighten, inspire, and mobilize" as well as enabling activists to construct ideas of radical "authenticity" and "'revolutionary' identities."<sup>207</sup> Not only do cultural approaches such as these enable a broader discussion of the meanings that activists grafted onto political violence, but they also have the potential to bring together a wider array of historical subjects. As Varon's own work has demonstrated, it is possible to see how specific articulations of militancy were culturally contagious, moving out beyond any one group to affect a wide swath of the New Left.<sup>208</sup> In the Canadian context, recent works by Bryan Palmer and Sean Mills have also revisited the significance of the nation's most well known guerrilla group, the FLQ, by noting the political and cultural connections that fused local nationalisms with a diverse current of anti-colonial thought and resistance movements the world over. In these histories, the work of intellectuals associated with the FLQ—activists and writers such as Pierre Vallières and Raoul Roy—are particularly prominent, creating opportunities for Palmer and Mills to uncover the ways in which the Cuban revolution, Black Power, and the ideas

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<sup>206</sup> Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*, 15. For a similar quantification of bombings and attacks, see Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 7.

<sup>207</sup> Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 75.

<sup>208</sup> Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 75.

of Franz Fanon came to occupy a heavy influence among Quebec revolutionaries.<sup>209</sup> Such approaches are critical for exposing how global patterns of left resistance moved across different spatial terrains, patterns of movement and exchange that led to the transmutation of political ideas, cultural orientations, and activist organization.

In extending these broad cultural and spatial perspectives to the politics of armed struggle in Vancouver, this chapter contributes to an ongoing historiographical conversation on the cultural meaning of armed action, both as a revolutionary process and as a way of making and tracing political connections across space. While the meanings attributed to armed action differed over time, perspectives on the organization and enactment of political violence remained a critical feature of the imagination and consciousness of militant social movements in the city. At the end of the long sixties, the conceptualization of armed struggle enabled a range of New Left activists to situate and explain themselves as part of a global pattern of anti-imperialist politics. For some Marxist-Leninists in particular, these patterns of political activity were not only a critical way of understanding the global orientation of anti-imperialist movements, but also enabled them to argue for specific forms of revolutionary authority and identity at home.

The expansion of the anarchist resurgence during the second half of the 1970s modified this interpretation by linking the fight against imperialism to struggles against patriarchy and environmental degradation, as well as articulating different ideas on the relationship between guerrilla action and other forms of political struggle. Nevertheless, anarchists maintained a globalized perception of armed struggle, one whose overarching spatial imagination enabled activists in one specific location to make a range of powerful connections with revolutionary actors elsewhere. In this sense, the conceptualization of armed struggle operated as a critical site for the construction of anarchism at home, while at the same time demonstrating how these local traditions were continually navigated and negotiated through a multi-dimensional political landscape.

The politics and culture of armed resistance movements during the long sixties deeply affected activists in Vancouver. While the war in Vietnam was critical in shaping activist politics in the city,<sup>210</sup> there has been little consideration of how armed struggle

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<sup>209</sup> Mills, *The Empire Within*, 41–46 and 73–84; Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 312–365.

<sup>210</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Peace Activism and Women's Orientalism," in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed. Nancy A.

activities and guerrilla politics in Quebec affected, resonated, and intersected with the lives of sympathetic revolutionaries in other parts of Canada.<sup>211</sup> Certainly, in the context of Vancouver's vibrant left community, the development of revolutionary movements in Quebec both prior to and during the October Crisis were critically important factors in shaping the consciousness and organizing initiatives of local activists. For the VLF, Vancouver Yippie, the IWW, and the Progressive Workers Movement, the armed actions unleashed by the FLQ sparked an outpouring of support for the guerrilla group as well as a range of criticisms of the federal government and security services. Because the federal state played a significant role in the subversion of dissent in Quebec through the introduction of the War Measures Act—legislation that applied to Vancouver as much as it did to Montreal or Quebec City—local activists were able to use debates over democratic practice and the meaning of civil liberties as a way to bridge the concerns of activists in Vancouver with those in other parts of the nation.<sup>212</sup> To do so, Yippie and the VLF organized a series of protests in Vancouver over the enactment of the War Measures Act, while other contingents of the VLF organized a series of meetings between New Left activists and local high-school students to discuss the significance of the federal government's response. In the wake of this activity, the police arrested seven VLF members for distributing FLQ literature in the city.<sup>213</sup>

Radical papers such as the *Yellow Journal* were also active in tying debates over armed struggle in Quebec to a wide reaching number of historical and transnational

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Hewitt (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2010), 193–220; Campbell, “Women United Against the War,” 339–348. For a broader consideration of war resisters in Canada see, Rodgers, *Welcome to Resisterville*; John Hagan, *Northern Passage: American Vietnam War Resisters in Canada* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); David S. Churchill, “An Ambiguous Welcome: Vietnam Draft Resistance, the Canadian State, and Cold War Containment,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 27, no. 73 (May 2004): 1–26. For a consideration of how war resisters transformed the social, political, and cultural life of their communities in the context of Toronto, see David S. Churchill, “American Expatriates and the Building of Alternative Social Space in Toronto, 1965–1977,” *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 39, no. 1 (2010): 31–44.

<sup>211</sup> For an important exception to this trend, see Dominique Clément, “The October Crisis of 1970: Human Rights Abuses Under the War Measures Act,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 42, no. 2 (2008): 160–186.

<sup>212</sup> Larry Gambone, interview with author, 9 June 2011; Marcy Toms, interview with author, 8 February 2011. See also Clément, “The October Crisis of 1970,” 166–170.

<sup>213</sup> Clément, “The October Crisis of 1970,” 169.

contexts.<sup>214</sup> The paper used critiques of Canadian foreign investment in the Caribbean to explain Canada as an imperial actor in its own right, while also emphasizing the historical process through which the country had been “built on the colonization of Quebec and wars of genocide against native peoples.” In this sense, the *Yellow Journal* connected the activism of Quebec militants to the expansion of Red Power, forms of resistance that “signify the emerging rebellion of Canada’s internal colonies.”<sup>215</sup> In addition, at the end of October 1970, activists released a special Quebec issue of the paper. Changing its name to *Le Journal Jaune*, the paper ran articles on the social, political, economic, and cultural conflicts that ran through Quebec society, reproduced data collected from the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism to highlight the domination of Anglo and foreign capital in the province, published critiques of the media’s representation of the FLQ, printed English translations of FLQ communiqués, and provided editorial space to the Free Quebec—Free Canada Committee, a group of local activists who argued that issue of national liberation in Quebec was, through the logic of global imperialism, directly tied to the interests of all Canadians.<sup>216</sup>

Few, however, were as enthusiastic in their support for the armed actions of the FLQ as the Youngblood collective. Enthusiastic champions of the class-war, this young group of hip communists set for themselves the task of agitating and organizing poor white working-class youth who lived in the city’s east side. In particular, Youngblood focused on that strata of the working class whose social and class positions were the most fragile and degrading, who suffered precarious employment or chronic unemployment, and who were compelled to survive through a mixture of social assistance and criminal activity. For Youngblood, these elements comprised a revolutionary lumpenproletariat (lumpen) that would act as the vanguard for the rest of the white working class. Generally unencumbered by the burdens of parenthood, debt, and career obligations, the lumpen had fresher minds and more radical spirits, temperaments that provided a source of “strength” and “determination” to the wider movement. As a result, Youngblood argued that white, lumpen youth had the most to

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<sup>214</sup> “A Police State in Your Own Back Yard,” *Yellow Journal* 1, 1 (23 April 1970): 8; “Quebec Elections...,” *Yellow Journal* 1, 2 (7 May 1970): 7; “Snow White Melts,” *Yellow Journal* (7 May 1970): 17; “Hog Wild in Montreal,” *Yellow Journal* (16 July 1970): 16.

<sup>215</sup> “Snow White Melts,” *Yellow Journal* (7 May 1970): 17.

<sup>216</sup> See *Le Journal Jaune* (29 October 1970).



gain from the destruction of the current order, and were the most qualified to undertake the challenge.<sup>217</sup>

If Youngblood understood the lumpen to be the most suited and capable of revolutionary agents, then the most meaningful form of action that they could take was to conduct armed struggle against the state. As a result, the collective's paper, *Youngblood*, celebrated armed struggle as both a revolutionary tactic and a cultural style. The masthead of each issue of the paper was marked with either a rifle or machine gun, while the inside pages featured images of armed guerrilla fighters,<sup>218</sup> schematic drawings of different firearms,<sup>219</sup> and numerous articles that alternated between bitter denunciations of the police and glowing support for a range of guerrilla groups including the Black Liberation Army,<sup>220</sup> the Irish Republican Army,<sup>221</sup> and Argentina's Tupamaros.<sup>222</sup>

It was the FLQ, however, that most vividly demonstrated the political and cultural importance of armed struggle.<sup>223</sup> Like other New Leftists in the city, Youngblood argued that struggles taking place in Quebec thematically reflected those faced by activists in Vancouver. While the general framework of imperialism offered one connective thread, it was the violence of the Canadian state, either as experienced or theoretical force, which provided the main basis of this connection. In this reading, it was the armed power of the state that was both attacking Quebec nationalists and subjugating the poor in Vancouver. Therefore, in conducting armed action against the state, the FLQ was "striking blow after blow at the same pigs who step on us everyday." From this, Youngblood positioned struggles taking place in Quebec as the eastern front of a

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<sup>217</sup> "A Message to the People from Youngblood," *Youngblood* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 2. Such ideas did not emerge only from the context of Vancouver's east side. Across the long sixties, a chorus of revolutionary writers, activists, and theorists had made arguments in favour of the lumpenproletariat's radical possibilities. For two of the most critical thinkers on this subject, see Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: Writings* (New York: Random House, 1972); and Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

<sup>218</sup> *Youngblood* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1971): 2; *Youngblood* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 3; *Youngblood* 1, no. 3 [n.d.]: 2, 3, 5, 8–9, and 11.

<sup>219</sup> *Youngblood* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1971): 2.

<sup>220</sup> "Black Liberation Struggle," *Youngblood* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 5.

<sup>221</sup> "Fighting Irish," *Youngblood* 1, no. 4 [n.d.]: 11.

<sup>222</sup> "Tupamaros," *Youngblood* 1, no. 4 [n.d.]: 5.

<sup>223</sup> "Quebec: 200 Years of Fighting the Pigs," *Youngblood* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1971): 4.

national battle. "When we see through the government's lies, we can dig that by fighting on the side of Quebec, we fight a common enemy and we fight to win. We have to understand that the Quebec struggle is going to rip Canada apart and we must choose to 'defend' the pig nation that Canada is, or join Quebec in smashing our common enemy."<sup>224</sup> Support for the FLQ was therefore an act of political solidarity based on the presumption of shared challenges and aspirations. Here, patterns of state violence acted as a unifying force in which Youngblood negotiated differences across space by highlighting shared experiences of violence, while simultaneously silencing the contemporary and historical differences that separated militant Quebec nationalists and white, lumpen youth in Vancouver.

Just as Youngblood used ideas of state violence in order to imagine and postulate connections between social movements in different parts of the country, they also imbued armed resistance to that violence with two critically important revolutionary meanings. The first was that armed struggle was made synonymous with certain articulations of cultural and political authority. Within the context of FLQ, the collective argued that the presence of guerrilla activity demonstrated the "highest level" of revolutionary "leadership." In this sense, "[t]he people of Quebec" looked to the FLQ "for leadership not because they were elected or appointed but because their actions move the whole struggle and the whole people forward."<sup>225</sup> More than anything else, Youngblood used the commitment to armed struggle as a barometer for measuring one's status, authority, and place within a hierarchy of resistance. Moreover, Youngblood's claim that armed struggle was synonymous with revolutionary leadership needs to be read together with the broader context of the collective's Marxist-Leninist orientation. Youngblood imagined the ideas of vanguardness and centralized political authority as both forms of political method, and as a set of desired cultural characteristics.

Youngblood's second point of emphasis was that armed struggle offered activists a process by which to transform themselves into revolutionary agents. Because imperialism would not willingly give up the power and influence it had constructed, the

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<sup>224</sup> "Quebec Will Win!," *Youngblood* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 3.

<sup>225</sup> "Quebec Will Win!," 3.

collective saw violence between activists and the state as inevitable.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, they defined these confrontations as productive. In this interpretation, Youngblood defined militant conflicts with one's enemy as an alchemical processes that could transform the unorganized lumpen into the "Peoples Army" [sic]. While they linked this transformation to the acquisition of military skills and capabilities, they also associated it with new mental and emotional states of existence:

The work Youngblood is doing now is directed towards building that peoples army. We have to be prepared to fight now. "It's only through warfare that we will learn warfare." Through fighting together, in the streets and neighborhoods, collectively, youth across North America can begin to build themselves into the kind of tough and disciplined fighting force that can really win "power to the people." This means moving in an organized way. It means preparing and learning. We are educating people about who the real enemy is and about the leadership and strengths of our brothers and sisters around the world — in Quebec particularly. We are trying to build an understanding that our survival depends on us collectively beginning to meet our needs and collectively fighting back.<sup>227</sup>

In this sense, enacting violence was not only about building the technical capacity to win political power or to contest the politics of one's enemy, it was also simultaneously a form of consciousness raising.

Although popular memory often conflates guerrilla activity and armed struggle with the long sixties, those forms of militancy also carried on into the latter 1970s and across the 1980s. In the United States, armed struggle groups such as the Black Liberation Army<sup>228</sup> and the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN)<sup>229</sup> were

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<sup>226</sup> "Youngblood: What We're About," *Youngblood* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 7.

<sup>227</sup> "Youngblood: What We're About," 7.

<sup>228</sup> For a range of discussions on the emergence and activity of the Black Liberation Army, see Akinyele Omowale Umoja, "The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, 224–251; "Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy*, ed. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 3–19; Russell Shoats, "Black Fighting Formations: Their Strengths, Weaknesses, and Potentialities," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, 128–138; Evelyn Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence: the Story of the African-American Trial Lawyer who Defended the Black Liberation Army* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993); and Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001).

<sup>229</sup> Meg Star, "Hit Them Harder: Leadership, Solidarity, and the Puerto Rican Independence Movement," in *The Hidden 1970s*, 135–154; Andrés Torres and José Velázquez ed., *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

active throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s. Just south of the BC border, Washington State was awash in armed struggle activity during the mid-to-late 1970s. Between 1975 and 1977, the George Jackson Brigade conducted twelve acts of sabotage in the Pacific Northwest, five robberies, and at least one act of jailbreak.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, these patterns of armed struggle can be dramatically extended in both time and scope by moving beyond the borders of North America. In the context of Western Europe, England, Ireland, Italy, West Germany, and Spain all hosted active guerrilla groups during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>231</sup>

In Vancouver, these patterns of guerrilla and armed activity contributed to the city's anarchist resurgence by providing local anti-authoritarians with a critical forum for the discussion of violence and revolutionary practice. Armed struggle became an important topic for comparing, connecting, contrasting, and situating local political activity into a globalized framework of left struggle. One of the most important channels for this discussion was *Open Road*. In its opening statement in 1976, the collective specifically stated that the activities of clandestine and armed struggle groups would be

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<sup>230</sup> George Jackson Brigade, *Political Statement of the George Jackson Brigade* (n.p: November 1977). For an overview of the group's activity, see Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*. For a compilation of primary documents related to the George Jackson Brigade, see Daniel Burton-Rose ed., *Creating a Movement with Teeth: A Documentary History of the George Jackson Brigade* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010).

<sup>231</sup> For an account of guerrilla activity in Britain, see Gordon Carr, *The Angry Brigade: A History of Britain's First Urban Guerrilla Group* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010); and Stuart Christie, *Granny Made Me an Anarchist*. Introductory explorations into the connection between armed struggle and the Irish Republican Army can be found in Alonso Rogelio's *The IRA and Armed Struggle* (London: Routledge, 2007); and Richard English, *Armed Struggle: the History of the IRA* (London: Macmillan, 2003). For armed struggle activity in the Italian context, see Robert Lumley, *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy, 1968–1978* (London: Verso, 1990); Richard Drake, *The Aldo Moro Murder Case* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995); and Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995). A fascinating discussion of Italian radicalism also takes place in Carlo Ginzburg's *The Judge and the Historian: Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth Century Miscarriage of Justice* (London: Verso, 1999). For works focusing on the development of armed activity in West Germany, see Varon, *Bringing the War Home*; Paul Hockenros, *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Leith Passmore, *Ulrike Meinhof and the Red Army Faction: Performing Terrorism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). See also, Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003). For a general introduction into the Basque nationalist movement and its struggles against the Spanish state, see Alfonso Pérez-Agote, *The Social Roots of Basque Nationalism* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006). For anarchist participation in the anti-Franco resistance movement, both inside and outside Spain, see Christie, *Granny Made Me an Anarchist*; and Albert Meltzer ed., *The International Revolutionary Solidarity Movement* (Over the Water, Sanday, Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1976).

a major area of focus for the paper, not only because their work was generally “blackened-out” or “distorted” within mainstream news coverage, but also because the public often associated these groups “rightly or wrongly, with anarchism, either ideologically or through the nature of their practice.”<sup>232</sup> As a result, news and analysis of armed struggle was continually present in the paper’s content. The collective published short historical pieces on the politics of armed struggle and anarchist militias within the context of the Spanish Civil War, the political and military transformation of rural and urban guerrilla movements in Latin America since the 1960s, the connections between armed struggle and anarchy-feminism, as well as news updates and analyses of contemporary clandestine groups such as the Sybionese Liberation Army, the New World Liberation Front, the Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and the George Jackson Brigade.<sup>233</sup>

Beginning in 1981, activists in Vancouver organized another anarchist journal, *Resistance: Documents and Analysis of the Illegal Front*.<sup>234</sup> Echoing the perspectives of earlier New Left groups in the city, *Resistance* argued that armed struggle was a necessary form of political struggle. As Youngblood had argued a decade earlier, *Resistance* also emphasized that armed struggle activity was an important task for the radical left. As a result, the journal argued strongly in favour of armed action in order to “build a revolutionary movement capable of an offensive against the State.” *Resistance* aimed to support this process through the publication of revolutionary texts, arguing that “[e]ven if we are not involved in armed actions ourselves, we must maintain active solidarity with the guerrillas that are.”<sup>235</sup> As a result, the paper concentrated on the activity of armed struggle collectives and the work of their supporters. While later issues of the journal developed editorial commentary—particularly surrounding the actions of

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<sup>232</sup> “Still Crazy After All These Years,” *Open Road* 1 (Summer 1976): 3.

<sup>233</sup> “Durutti: The People Armed,” *Open Road* 1 (Summer 1976): 24; “Abraham Guillen’s Guerrilla Strategy,” *Open Road* 3 (Summer 1977): 15; Helen Ellenbogen, “Feminism: The Anarchist Impulse Comes Alive,” *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 8 and 13; “SLA Survivors Fight On,” *Open Road* 1 (Summer 1976): 8 and 31; Celine Hagbard, “NWLF: Good Hit, No Pitch,” *Open Road* 3 (Summer 1977): 8; Mark Brothers, “Weather Underground Explodes,” *Open Road* 2 (Spring 1977): 9; “German Guerrillas Raise The Ante,” *Open Road* 3 (Summer 1977): 9; “GJB Blasts Media Blackout,” *Open Road* 3 (Summer 1977): 5; “Free Rita Brown,” *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/78): 3.

<sup>234</sup> The first issue, released in June of 1981, was originally titled *Guerrilla Notes*. The name was changed to *Resistance* in the following issue.

<sup>235</sup> “Solidarity with the Guerrilla,” *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981), 0.

the Direct Action collective—early issues stuck almost entirely to the reproduction of revolutionary statements, communiqués, and analyses of different armed groups including the Black Liberation Army (United States), the RAF (West Germany), Armed Proletarian Nuclei (Italy), the June 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement (West Germany), Azione Rivoluzionaria (Italy), and many others.<sup>236</sup>

If *Resistance* continued to define armed struggle as a critical form of political activity, it also articulated that importance through a transnational framework. To do so, the journal focused heavily on the lives of incarcerated guerrillas in different parts of the world, experiences used to highlight both the geographical scope of armed resistance as well as emphasize patterns of political and cultural exchange that took place between different movements. Themes of transnational solidarity were particularly prominent in the first issue of the journal. The collective published a statement by the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) that linked the fate of its incarcerated activists with imprisoned RAF militants who had recently initiated a hunger strike to protest the use of solitary confinement and other abusive forms of treatment. For the IRSP, the commitment to fight imperialism and the state repression that came in the wake of that struggle operated as a form of transnational connection that united Irish and German militants.<sup>237</sup> Similar themes were reflected in a letter from Irish National Liberation Army prisoner Patsy O'Hara. O'Hara, who was on hunger strike in a Northern Ireland prison, also wrote to the RAF, declaring that "for a number of years I have followed your struggle and have always had the greatest respect and admiration for your stand against imperialism and native capitalism. I believe we have a lot in common in many ways."<sup>238</sup> The presence of state violence imposed through prison conditions and the fight against capitalism and imperialism was not only used by O'Hara to link the Irish and German struggles, but it

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<sup>236</sup> Black Liberation Army, "Why Build the Armed Front," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 45; "Black Liberation Army Communique," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 1–6; Red Army Faction, "RAF Communique on the Attempted Assassination of General Alexander Haig – June 25, 1979," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 37–41; "RAF Statement of 26.7.80," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 41–42; "Hungerstrike Declaration of the RAF," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 2–6; "Nuclei Armata Proletari: Initial Phase of Armed Struggle in Italy," *Resistance* 2 (Spring 1982): 20–30; "Political Record of the N.A.P.," *Resistance* 2 (Spring 1982): 31–41; "Final Statement from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June Movement," *Resistance* 3 (Spring 1982): 29–35; "Azione Rivoluzionaria: Statement and '77 Chronology," *Resistance* 3 (Spring 1982): 42–53.

<sup>237</sup> "RAF Hunger Strike," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 1. For a statement by RAF prisoners on the hungerstrike, see "Hungerstrike Declaration of the RAF," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 12–6.

<sup>238</sup> "INLA Prisoner Solidarity Letter," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 23–24.

also enabled him to call for the unification of militant activists around the world. "I believe to achieve our aspirations of socialism we cannot confine it to our national boundaries. By its very nature we must be internationalist in our outlook, revolutionary organizations must co-operate towards this goal, the ending of exploitation of man by man."<sup>239</sup>

The journal also supported incarcerated guerrillas by printing statements from groups such as Relatives of Political Prisoners, a network who advocated on behalf of family members imprisoned in West Germany, Switzerland, and Australia for political activity. Like O'Hara and the IRSP, Relatives of Political Prisoners tied the specific struggles of their loved ones to the political struggles of militants in other parts of the world, particularly in Northern Ireland and the Basque region of Spain.<sup>240</sup> A letter by an anonymous French revolutionary, written in celebration of International Women's Day, likewise maintained that global struggles against imperialism could create important bonds between women "in spite of the enormous distances which actually separate us."<sup>241</sup> For *Resistance*, however, themes of transnational solidarity between armed groups and their supporters were not simply processes taking place elsewhere, but were also connected to the political motivations and aspirations of activists in Vancouver. In this sense, the journal defined its very existence as an act of solidarity and a statement of support for armed struggle, patterns of connection that it built by emphasizing shared ideas of militant commitment, sacrifice, and experiences with state violence.<sup>242</sup>

While statements in support of the theoretical and applied notion of armed struggle connected *Resistance* to older patterns of New Left opposition in the city, the journal was clear that such activity was not the only acceptable form of militant politics, nor was it the specific fiefdom of a professional revolutionary unit. Publishing the work of a wide array of leftist guerrilla groups was clearly meaningful and important to the collective, but the journal maintained that its own political perspective was squarely within the anarchist tradition. For *Resistance* "[t]he party, the vanguard, the dictatorship

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<sup>239</sup> "INLA Prisoner Solidarity Letter," 23-24. *Resistance* also published a telegram sent to the RAF by imprisoned members of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, the main armed section of the Basque liberation movement. See "ETA-Militar[y] Solidarity Telegram," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 36.

<sup>240</sup> "Declaration of the Relatives During the Occupation of the 'Spiegel' Office," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 8-10.

<sup>241</sup> "Women for the Crisis," *Guerrilla Notes* 1 (June 1981): 10-13.

<sup>242</sup> "Solidarity with the Guerrilla," 0.

of the proletariat, and other sacrosanct marxist-lenninist conceptions can and do seriously hinder the development of truly revolutionary societies.”<sup>243</sup> Instead, *Resistance* looked to armed struggle against the state as part of a panoply of militant tactics. To this end, the journal called on activists to support a spectrum of tactics arguing that it was “in the interests of the police-state that we condemn and withdraw support from our sisters and brothers who have taken up arms against imperialism just as it is in the interests of the police-state that we condemn those that choose un-armed forms of militant struggle i.e. squatting, demos etc. We must recognize the enemy and support the different struggles against it.”<sup>244</sup> In this sense, guerrilla activity remained a critical aspect of left struggle, but it was no longer a form of militancy that tied the political and cultural authority of revolutionary leadership to the ability and willingness to attack the state with arms.

Although *Resistance* was one of the most vocal and avid supporters of armed struggle, the collective was not the only bastion of this militant turn. In fact, in its work the journal made public a wider series of political discussions that had been circulating locally over the previous several years. Much of this discussion had taken place within the confines of an armed struggle discussion group, a rotating collection of anarchists and anti-authoritarians who met regularly to discuss the theory of armed action and the practice of guerrilla groups. Organized by Jill Bend, Brent Taylor, and others, the group was never given a name and always met outdoors within the expansive spaces of the city’s parks.<sup>245</sup> For Jill Bend, the group’s engagement with armed struggle was the logical extension of a much broader pattern of militant struggle that bridged the activity and consciousness of local activists with political currents elsewhere. In this reading, Bend argued that local interest in armed struggle emerged from the

growth of the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the national liberation struggles that we saw all around us; not immediately in our locale, but we’re not isolated. We don’t live, you know, in a “one man is an island” concept. We are affected by all that is around us, and we were a very sympathetic group of people that were deeply affected by all these other struggles. Whether it was the Irish nationalist struggle or the South African divestment [and] anti-apartheid [movement]. All

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<sup>243</sup> “Solidarity with the Guerrilla,” 0.

<sup>244</sup> “A Note to Our Readers,” *Resistance* 3 (Spring 1982): 0.

<sup>245</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 13 March 2012; Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.



these different things...the FSLN [Sandinista National Liberation Front], the FMLN [Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front], the Black Panthers, the Weather Underground—that era, from the mid-sixties to the, well, to the eighties anyway, but certainly during the seventies that was what influenced us.<sup>246</sup>

In this way, the politics and theory of armed struggle and its application by guerrilla groups around the world provided a powerful form of global connection and political identity for local activists.

While patterns of guerrilla activity outside of Vancouver were important in shaping the activism and political imagination of local collectives such as *Resistance*, *Open Road*, and the armed struggle study group, issues taking place closer to home also heavily influenced anarchists in the city. In fact, the two geographical poles of resistance, those at home and those elsewhere, were never separate. Nor were the boundaries and borders of the local ever clear. Instead, the political imagination of local anarchists occupied multiple spaces simultaneously. This was particularly true for those active in the prison abolition movement, where the social violence of capitalism and the state clashed violently with an increasingly organized and militant prisoner rights movement. In this context, activists connected their assessments of local conditions at the BC Penitentiary in New Westminster and Burnaby's Oakalla Prison with a wider pattern of prison agitation and revolt that had swept across Canada and the United States during the 1960s and 1970s.

As Liz Samuels notes, the anti-prison movements of the 1970s owed much of their existence to the early work of activists associated with the civil rights and black freedom struggles in the United States. Here, militants associated with the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party agitated for prisoner rights and popularized new theoretical understandings that connected the violence, exploitation, and racism of the prison system to the operation of capitalism and imperialism. Meanwhile, on the other side of the wall, prisoners organized radical reading groups, inmate committees, unions, and other projects that sought to change conditions in the prison itself and to raise the consciousness of prisoners as a collective force. As part of this process, activists mixed calls for penal reform with radical critiques that questioned the purpose, origin, and significance of incarceration as a social remedy. Incarcerated community activists,

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<sup>246</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012.

militants whose work with the anti-war and anti-imperialist struggles during the 1960s and 1970s landed them behind bars, also shaped this emerging radical analysis of the prison system. In this heady mix, activists became prisoners, prisoners became activists, and both groups attempted to organize and agitate together from within the prison system itself. The result was an increasing emphasis by the early 1970s on the idea of “abolition,” a form of political praxis that included, as Samuels argues, “both direct confrontation with the prison system and building alternative practices to replace confinement and solve the social problems that the criminal justice system could not.”<sup>247</sup>

As the abolition movement clashed with intransigent defenders of incarceration, prisons in North America became some of the most oppressive and violent battle grounds for the enactment and contestation of social movement politics across the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Work strikes, sit-ins, and occupations where prisoners rioted or seized control of their surroundings became endemic in the United States, rising from five incidents in 1967 to fifteen in 1968. In both 1970 and 1971, there were thirty-seven uprisings, while 1972 ended with a total of forty-eight, the highest recorded number in US history. While these radical actions displayed the mounting agency, organization, and political conciseness of prison groups and their allies, the response to those movements, such as the killing of twenty-nine prison activists and ten of their hostages by prison officials and local police at Attica prison in New York state in 1971, not only highlighted the extreme risk of such activism, but also served to reinforce the general barbarity of the system as a whole.<sup>248</sup>

The Canadian prison context reflected similar expressions of prison activism, community mobilization, and various modes of state violence. In 1971, inmates at Kingston Penitentiary took over the prison for four days in order to protest the construction of another prison in the area, the maximum security Millhaven Institution. In 1974, Millhaven again became the focus of debate when one its inmates, Edward Nalon,

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<sup>247</sup> Liz Samuels, “Improvising on Reality: The Roots of Prison Abolition,” in Dan Berger ed., *The Hidden 1970s*, 21.

<sup>248</sup> For additional historical accounts of US prison movements, see Ronald Berkman, *Opening the Gates: The Rise of the Prisoners’ Movement* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1979); Bert Useem and Peter Kimball, *States of Siege: US Prison Riots, 1971–1986* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California’s Radical Prison Movement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); and Lee Bernstein, “The Age of Jackson: George Jackson and the Culture of American Prisons in the 1970s,” *Journal of American Culture* 30, no. 3 (September 2007): 310–333.

took his own life after spending an extensive amount of time in solitary confinement. The following year on 10 August 1975, prisoners at Millhaven staged a one-day hunger strike and a self-organized memorial service to mark Nalon's death. Two months earlier, three prisoners returning to solitary confinement overthrew their guards and seized fifteen hostages at the British Columbia Penitentiary (BC Pen) in New Westminster. After a prolonged standoff, state security services stormed the prison and shot two people: Andy Bruce, a BC Pen inmate; and a hostage named Marry Steinhauser, who, in addition to being a classification officer at the prison, was also an ally of many of the incarcerated, including Andy Bruce. While Bruce recovered from his injuries, Steinhauser died as a result of the shooting. In May of 1976, another prisoner at Millhaven, Robert Landers, died of heart failure when the emergency assistance buttons in his cell failed to summon the attending guard. An organizer and activist, Landers had been involuntarily transferred to Millhaven from Quebec's Archambault prison, a maximum security institution that had also been the subject of a prolonged prisoner strike earlier in the year.<sup>249</sup>

In the context of these escalating waves of agitation, violence, and militancy, activists on both sides of prison walls in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, organized a National Prison Justice Day for 10 August 1976. While prisoners conducted one-day hunger strikes, community activists created Prison Justice Day Committees to organize events outside prisons to support the striking prisoners and amplify the

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<sup>249</sup> Academic literature on the history of late twentieth century prison movements in Canada is scant. For studies in the fields of criminology and sociology respectively, see John Lowman and Brian MacLean, "Prisons and Protest in Canada," *Social Justice* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 130–154; and, R.S. Ratner and Barry Cartwright, "Politicized Prisoners: From Class Warriors to Faded Rhetoric," *Journal of Human Justice* 2, no. 1 (September 1990): 75–92. For more conventional historical accounts of prison movements in Canada, see Luc Gosselin, *Prisons in Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1982); Prisoners' Justice Day Committee, *August 10<sup>th</sup> National Prison Justice Day: A Brief History* (Vancouver: Prisoners Justice Day Committee, [n.d.]). Coverage of Canadian prison riots is included in M. Barnholden, *Reading the Riot Act: A Brief History of Riots in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2005). Some of the most focused accounts of prison activism come from the personal accounts of activists and prisoners. See Claire Culhane, *Barred From Prison* (Vancouver: Pulp Press, 1979); Claire Culhane, *Still Barred from Prison: Social Injustice in Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1985); Claire Culhane, *No Longer Barred from Prison* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991). For secondary accounts of Culhane's activism, see Mick Lowe, *One Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1992); and Alison Rowley, "'Bringing the Outside World in': Canadian Prisoners' Correspondence with Claire Culhane, Activist and Penal Abolitionist, 1976–1996," (PhD dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 2005). For a wide-ranging discussion of prison life in British Columbia, see P.J. Murphy and Jennifer Murphy ed., *Sentences and Paroles: A Prison Reader* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1998). See also Rolston, "A Machine for Grinding Up Lives Slowly."

concerns and criticisms of prisoners and prison abolitionists. In Vancouver, many of the activists involved in organizing National Prison Justice Day as well as the other prison related projects, were anarchists. Activists connected to *Open Road*, *Blackout*, *Revolting Women*, the Anarchist Party of Canada, as well as the anarchist and radical feminist agitation-propaganda collective, *Those Women*, participated in or developed a number of prison abolition collectives including the Solitary Confinement Abolition Project, Joint Effort, Women Against Prisons, Women Serving Women in Prison, the Native Prisoner Support Group, Books for Prisoners, and various other prison related projects.<sup>250</sup>

In this local context, the escalating waves of prison activism, the anarchist resurgence, and the politics of armed struggle merged together for two reasons. First, a growing familiarity with the prison system provided sympathetic activists with a front row seat from which to view the highly violent, oppressive, and dehumanizing experiences of the criminal justice system. The 1975 hostage taking at the BC Pen, the killing of Steinhauser, and the associated debate over the brutality of solitary confinement were indicative of this political turn. When Bruce and his two co-defendants stood trial the following year, many anarchists attended the proceedings. For Jill Bend, the trial was a revelation. The discussion of harsh prison conditions, and the fact that all three defendants were men of colour and from poor backgrounds, infused the trial with strong political connotations. The trial motivated many activists to take up more work within the prison abolition movement, political work that led increased patterns of militancy for some activists. As Bend explained,

Working around issues relating to the justice system, especially being a prison abolitionist, being against prisons, wanting to bring them down—as opposed to prisoners’ rights—although prisoners’ rights would be an element of what we were working on, that work makes you more militant. It makes you see more black and white; the dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots, the poor and the wealthy and that whole thing. It polarizes things. It makes you more militant, and being more militant also would draw you to that work. So there's a synthesis going on there.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012, 22 March 2012, and 3 October 2012; Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011; Brooke (Marion) Lydbrooke, interview with author, 3 June 2012.

<sup>251</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 6 March 2012.

Prison activism acted as a lens that focused and magnified issues of social inequality, making them starker and more pronounced, while at the same time highlighting the need for activists to develop radical analyses and forms of action that would contest these patterns of abuse.

In addition to the influence of the Lucas, Wilson, and Bruce trial, 1976 also saw the incarceration of the AIM activist Leonard Peltier at Oakalla prison in Burnaby. Peltier, who was wanted by American authorities in connection with a shootout that killed two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge reservation in North Dakota in 1975—killings that Peltier denies committing—had originally fled the US and taken refuge near Hinton, Alberta. When the Canadian authorities arrested him, he was transferred to Oakalla prison.<sup>252</sup> Kept in solitary confinement, Peltier's case drew a wide array of support both in Vancouver and abroad. Anarchist abolitionists, in addition to many local groups and communities, worked with Peltier's defence committee. Bend and others attended rallies, handed out leaflets, and put up posters to mobilize community support and exposure for the case. In addition to the Peltier campaign, anarchists were also highly active in the case of Garry and Dino Butler, AIM activists who were also apprehended in British Columbia before being extradited back to the United States. As a result, Bend and her colleagues became close friends and allies with a number of local Aboriginal activists in Vancouver, including Kelly White. White, a veteran of the 1974 Native People's Caravan and the Native People's Embassy, was an AIM supporter in Vancouver and the main

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<sup>252</sup> For works on Peltier and the American Indian Movement, see Leonard Peltier, *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sundance*, ed. Harvey Arden (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). For a detailed overview of the FBI's activities against AIM, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988). See also John Sayer, *Ghost Dancing the Law: The Wounded Knee Trials* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997). For a series of general introductions to the politics and development of Red Power in North America, see Lee Maracle, "Red Power Legacies and Lives," in *New World Coming*, 358–367; Maracle, *Bobbi Lee*; Vine Deloria Jr., "Alcatraz, Activism, and Accommodation," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18, no. 4 (1994): 25–32; Donna Hightower-Langston, "American Indian Women's Activism in the 1960s and 1960s," *Hypatia* 18, no. 2 (2006), 114–132; Anna Hoefnagels, "Native Canadian Activism and the Development of Powwows in the 1960s," in *The Sixties in Canada*, 233–255; Bryan Palmer, "'Indians of All Tribes': The Birth of Red Power," in *Debating Dissent*, 193–210. For an account of the relationship between Red Power and the New Left, see Sherry Smith, "Indians, the Counterculture, and the New Left," in Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler ed., *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism since 1900* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research, 2007), 142–160. For a compelling narrative that places post-1960s indigenous resistance into a longer temporal pattern, see Gord Hill, *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010).

political contact person through which anarchists accessed and supported Red Power movements both locally and in the United States.<sup>253</sup>

Prisons became a powerful political nexus for anarchist abolitionists by providing them with a form of political work that highlighted state violence, exposed them to the militant activities of prisoners, and introduced them to incarcerated AIM activists whose own political work had engendered militant confrontations with the American and Canadian state. Therefore, local experiences with state violence and a series of interactions with armed movements such as AIM further radicalized sections of anarchist resurgence in Vancouver and helped to nurture a growing interest in the practice of armed struggle.

The Direct Action collective both emerged out of and reflected this political and social environment. Its early members—Brent Taylor, Doug Stewart, and Ann Hansen—were enthusiastic participants in Vancouver’s anarchist resurgence and contributed to the community’s engagement with the politics, culture, and history of armed struggle. All three were avid supporters of disseminating the ideas, texts, and statements of guerrilla groups, either through the armed struggle discussion group or the anarchist press. Moreover, all three had also worked on prison abolition projects, and were clearly sympathetic to the ways in which poor and marginalized communities turned to crime as a means of securing their social needs, as well as supporting the more overtly political activity of groups such as AIM.<sup>254</sup> While many of the city’s anarchists supported the practices of armed struggle in principle or, at the very least, promoted it as a worthy topic of discussion, Taylor, Stewart, and Hansen wanted to develop the capacity to conduct armed actions themselves.

After years of working with community groups and other forms of legal, aboveground organizing, these three activists turned to armed struggle as the next logical step in their political work as revolutionaries. They maintained that the mass movements that they had worked with over the years could benefit from the activities of an armed contingent. They proposed that the development of a clandestine collective

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<sup>253</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012. For an additional reference to White’s participation in the Native People’s Caravan, see Vern Harper, *Following the Red Path: The Native People’s Caravan, 1974* (Toronto: NC Press, 1979), 38.

<sup>254</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012, and 13 March 2012; Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

would be able to use the techniques of sabotage and guerrilla organization to stall, block, and otherwise obstruct a range of socially harmful projects in ways that would support popular social movements. Likewise, they also hoped that conducting successful and repeated physical attacks against corporations and the state would inspire, instruct, and spread militant practices within those mass movements. While the specific concerns associated with these projects will be taken up in future chapters, this chapter will now explore some of the more rudimentary factors that underlay the formation of the Direct Action collective. In particular, it demonstrates how traveling between Canada, the United States, and Western Europe enabled Brent Taylor and Ann Hansen to work closely with a range of guerrilla groups, experiences that helped to inspire them to develop armed actions in Canada. Nevertheless, the lessons that these activists learned abroad were not put into practice in a straightforward way. Instead, both Taylor and Hansen modified what they learned from other guerrillas through their own experiences and political priorities.

For Brent Taylor, travel had long been connected to the construction of his political identity. Growing up the child of university professors, he spent much of the mid-to-late 1960s traveling with his parents as they taught at a variety of west coast academic institutions. At Stanford, Oregon State, and the Pullman campus of Washington State University, Taylor garnered early memories of campus radicalism and anti-war activism. These early experiences and memories had a profound impact on him, providing an introduction to social issues and political ideas, and turned student radicals into important figures of political relevance and inspiration. Settled back on Vancouver Island by the end of the decade, Taylor began to develop his own sense of political engagement. In 1971, he worked to organize a student walkout at his school, Oak Bay high school in greater Victoria. The event was one of many student walkouts and public protests organized around the country to protest the American military's decision to test nuclear weapons at Amchitka, in the north Pacific. The following year, at fifteen, he took the title of Abby Hoffman's *Steal This Book* literally. By eighteen he was reading a diverse mixture of anarchist and communist political theory. He augmented these initial forays with more travel. After graduating from high school in 1974, he hitchhiked east, passing through Kenora, Ontario where the Ojibway Warriors Society had established an armed occupation of Anicinabe Park. Soon after, Taylor continued east to Toronto. There, for a short time, he became a regular feature at the city's

Rochdale College, a radical experiment in communal living and alternative education, and a critical hub for hip life in Toronto.<sup>255</sup>

Returning to the Canadian west coast in 1975, Taylor enrolled briefly at the University of Victoria. This was an underwhelming experience for him. Rather than studying for his courses, he spent the majority of his time reading radical literature in the library. Symptomatic of his growing frustration resulting from the gap between what he wanted from an education and what he was given by his instructors, Taylor remembers an introductory course on Canadian politics as particularly disappointing. “It wasn’t moving me, undergrad political science. I remember I started to challenge the course curriculum, you know, like, do you really just want us to go over this pabulum of politics 101? And are we really supposed to believe that Canada is a constitutional democracy and blah-blah-blah? You know, that sort of thing. It just didn’t seem right to me.” Certainly, it seemed much less exciting than the continued patterns of radical left-wing activity taking place south of the border. Finding no compelling political environment in Victoria, Taylor set out to find the radical movements that he encountered through the radical press, movements that were, to him, clearly connected to the echoing memories and images of student radicals he had glimpsed as a child. While the middle of the 1970s is often used as a transition point to mark the shift away from radical politics, it was clear to Taylor that the United States was still an exciting and revolutionary place in 1975.<sup>256</sup> Particularly drawn to the excitement and militancy of the San Francisco Bay Area, Taylor’s travels to California provided him with a series of direct experiences with urban guerrilla groups, debates over the strategy and meaning of armed struggle, and also helped to focus his personal politics along anarchist lines.

The frenetic and lively atmosphere of the Bay Area underground drew Taylor in for an entire year. From late 1975 to late 1976, he immersed himself into a political matrix that amplified much of the radicalism and militant activity he had absorbed through his own acts of early rebellion, radical reading, travel, and from the fleeting experiences of his youth during the late 1960s. While this included an intense period of formalized political study, Taylor’s time in the Bay Area also demonstrates how the

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<sup>255</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012. See also Scott Rutherford, “Canada’s Other Red Scare: The Anicinabe Park Occupation and Indigenous Decolonization,” in *The Hidden 1970s*, 77–94; as well as Henderson, *Making the Scene*.

<sup>256</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.



process of learning the political ideas and practices of the revolutionary New Left were inseparable from the daily practices of militant living. Here, radical bookstores, networks of collective “cadre” houses, the streets of Oakland, and California prisons formed the social spaces that not only enabled Taylor to meet new people and exchange political ideas, but also formed a series of collective social settings where he could live, perform, repeat, and practice those ideas in the context of daily life.<sup>257</sup>

One of the most important spaces was San Francisco’s New Dawn Books, which was run by what Taylor described as a collective of Maoist “hippie freaks.” Needing a place to stay upon arriving in Berkeley, the collective allowed Taylor to sleep in the store in exchange for helping out around the shop. Providing a place for the dissemination of radical literature of all sorts, New Dawn was also a political and social hub that exposed Taylor to a large array of radical ideas as well as facilitated his social emersion into aspects of the Bay Area’s most militant left groups. Taylor participated in a series of radical reading and discussion groups that operated out of the store, providing him with a collective space to further engage with a wide range of left ideas. At the same time, Taylor also experienced New Dawn as a setting for a series of introductions and interactions with local activists involved with armed struggle work. Here, the worlds of radical literature and radical movements intersected as he met supporters of the Weather Underground who came to New Dawn to drop off copies of the famed guerrilla’s periodical, *Osawatomie*. Activists doing support work for other Bay Area anti-imperialist guerrilla groups, such as the New World Liberation Front and the Emiliano Zapata Unit also used New Dawn as a place for the dissemination of their literature.<sup>258</sup> Taylor was also introduced a collection of radical Iranian ex-pats and students, Marxist dissidents who had fled the Shah’s regime and came to New Dawn to collect “action manuals,” texts that provided detailed instruction on the strategic and technical processes of conducting armed actions, sabotage, and other aspects of guerrilla warfare and militant insurgency. Workers at the bookstore kept these documents discreetly under the counter, and only disseminated them upon request.<sup>259</sup> As a place where the aboveground and underground came together, New Dawn offered Taylor a critical space through which to access radical currents in the city.

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<sup>257</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>258</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012. For additional commentary on the NWLF and the EZU, see Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*, 36–37 and 75–76.

<sup>259</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

Eventually, activists connected to the bookstore offered Taylor a spot in their collective house. It was at this point that Taylor learned that both New Dawn and the house he was invited to stay at were closely affiliated with the Emiliano Zapata Unit (EZU). Like his time at New Dawn, Taylor experienced his time in this activist household as a space that allowed him to continue to engage with New Left ideas, particularly the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and a pastiche of Maoist and Third World revolutionary writing. However, what struck Taylor most about living in the house was what he referred to as its “disciplined” environment. Taylor experienced life in the EZU cadre house as highly structured, in which everything, from the time at which political discussions took place, to who did the dishes, was organized according to a schedule set by the senior members of the collective. The collective developed these patterns of living to train activists in the rigours of self-discipline and centralized organization, values they saw as critical for the creation of a Marxist-Leninist inspired revolutionary vanguard. Reflecting this sense of revolutionary seriousness, each EZU home existed as its own political-domestic cell. Occupants of one house might know that other houses existed, but until they made their way further into the political structure of the group, were unlikely to know who lived in the other houses, where they were, or what political projects they were conducting.<sup>260</sup>

From his place in the cadre houses, Taylor began doing support work for the EZU. Walking around the streets of Oakland, Taylor and other low-level supporters pasted the group’s communiqués onto telephone poles and other available surfaces around the city. Despite the general emphasis on security and precaution, the work was risky, and Taylor was soon arrested along with another EZU supporter. He spent most of the next two weeks in an Oakland jail before being released without charge. By that time, however, the police had broken up the EZU houses and arrested and detained its members. As the support network shifted into organizing the accuseds’ legal defence, Taylor began attending the trials and hearings, as well as traveling to San Quentin and Vacaville prison to visit one of the incarcerated activists with whom he had become close friends. Eventually, Taylor’s support work for the EZU garnered enough attention from the police that he decided to skip town. At the end of 1976, he left the Bay Area with a fellow activist who—after a prolific stint as a radical graffitist—likewise decided it was time to disappear. The plan was to travel to Boston, home of the Sam Melville-Jonathan

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<sup>260</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

Jackson Unit, another armed struggle collective that was attracting attention within the revolutionary left. Unfortunately for the two militants, their trip to Massachusetts was foiled after the police arrested them in Michigan. The graffitist was taken away, and Taylor was deported to Windsor, Ontario.<sup>261</sup>

Although he never saw his traveling companion again, Taylor's trip east from California provided him with time to reflect back with introspection and frustration at his experiences in the Bay Area. He was clearly impressed with what local armed groups had accomplished. Activists had conducted numerous armed actions, integrated them into popular community campaigns, and developed a diverse underground support network rooted in alternative modes of militant living. Taylor found this political activity exciting, inspiring, and educational. Therefore, by the time he left California, Taylor had decided that developing underground forms of armed struggle was a worthwhile political contribution and something he was personally willing to put into practice back in Canada.<sup>262</sup>

While his time in the Bay Area underground was inspiring in many ways, it was also deeply troubling. Since his teenage years, he had held a strong admiration for the counterculture, a fondness that clashed with what he understood as the cultural and political "rigidness" that often ran through the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist groups he encountered during his time in California. Despite a long-standing reverence for groups like the Yippies, he remembers a moment on his way to Boston where he repeated a series of disparaging remarks against anarchism, ideas he picked up from *The Urban Guerrilla* journal of the New World Liberation Front. The graffitist was not impressed. As Taylor recalls, "he actually laid into me, saying 'Aw that's a bunch of bullshit...look whose been doing all this other stuff that you like, they're anarchists, right?' And he's referring back to the Chicago 7-type-people and the Yippies, and I think...yeah. And as a matter of fact, I identified with their countercultural side, right, much more than I did this rigid revolutionary. So I started realizing I should start having a politics—a clear politics—that's more in touch with where I'm at personally."<sup>263</sup> That politics was anarchism.

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<sup>261</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>262</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>263</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

After being deported to Windsor, Taylor traveled east to Toronto and moved in to a series of houses organized by ex-Rochdale College activists, most of whom seemed to Taylor to convey a anti-authoritarian or loose anarchist sense of self. Nevertheless, they lacked the militancy that Taylor was interested in perusing. Eventually, Taylor found the militancy he was looking for. However, rather than the flesh and blood militants he had encountered in the Bay Area, Taylor encountered his political inspiration in the printed form of *Open Road* which had made its way into his hands through ex-Rochdale activists. By 1977, Taylor had relocated to Vancouver and quickly became a significant part of the city's anarchist resurgence.<sup>264</sup>

Like Brent Taylor, Ann Hansen's experience with radical urban guerrilla communities outside of Canada played a fundamental role in her political development, a process of radicalization that started within the Maoist left in Canada, but eventually crossed over into anarchism. Likewise, Hansen experienced these political changes through local dissatisfactions at home combined with political mixing and radical living experienced while traveling. Rather than the western United States, however, Hansen moved through the radical networks of England, France, and West Germany.<sup>265</sup>

Born in 1953, Hansen grew up in Concord, Ontario, a isolated and semi-rural suburb north of Toronto. Where Taylor cited his time on American university campuses as an introduction to the politics of the long sixties, Hansen, like many Canadians too young to participate in the movement's initial formation, encountered the ethos of the time through the daily din of the mainstream media. In this, the counterculture particularly enthralled her. When the newspaper arrived at her parent's home, she would quickly comb its pages for anything to do with the exotic longhairs. To her dismay, not everyone in the house was pleased with this desire to, in her words, "become a hippie." Looking back and laughing about the experience, she recalls a series of fights with her father over what communal living might do to the family's heirlooms. When her father queried as to the hypothetical fate of the family silverware, Hansen alternated between rejecting the importance of material items or, perhaps worse, suggesting that the treasured goods would be held collectively by the imaginary commune.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>265</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

<sup>266</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

Despite her keen affiliation with the counterculture, Hansen's first introduction to radical politics came when she enrolled in the University of Waterloo in 1978 where she studied Marxism and anarchism, and became involved writing articles for the campus paper, *The Chevron*.<sup>267</sup> While many student papers were highly politicized environments, *The Chevron* was particularly so, being tightly controlled by a group of Maoists connected to the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) (CPC-ML). With her reverence for the counterculture, it might have seemed strange for her to work with activists whose political culture was much more "straight" than Hansen's hip background. Nevertheless, for a short while, Hansen did exactly this:

I dug these people. Even though these guys—Okay, it's the hippie days, right—these guys all have super short hair, they always wear really clean, crisp—they didn't wear suits—but very crisp clean clothing. The newspaper was totally written by them. No matter what I wrote, they would re-write it. It was a CPC-ML paper, except it was a student paper. They'd even throw in pictures of Mao, and it was a huge controversy on the campus. Most people wouldn't work there. I did, because suddenly, for a short while, it became the answer to so many of my questions.<sup>268</sup>

Like Taylor, Hansen's time among Maoist activists produced a powerful yet ambiguous set of experiences. A vigorous exposure to Marxist ideas of class and capitalism provided Hansen with a theoretically inspired framework for interpreting the world, yet the strict controls that she faced as a writer were alienating and she eventually left the paper and distanced herself from the CPC-ML. Like other New Left dissidents, anarchism offered Hansen a way to fill the gap left by a discarded Maoist politics. Attracted to the growing prominence of anarchist and anti-hierarchical social movements during the second half of the 1970s, Hansen used her place within the Integrated Studies Program at the University of Waterloo to travel to Europe to study the re-emergence of anarchist social movements through first-hand observation. After getting approval for the project from her course supervisor, she left for the United Kingdom in 1979.<sup>269</sup>

After a short stint in London, Hansen made her way to Paris, a city that seemed to offer a wide range of political perspectives, encounters, and experiences. In general,

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<sup>267</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

<sup>268</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011. Time spent at the *Chevron* is also detailed in Hansen, *Direct Action*, 22–23.

<sup>269</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Hansen, *Direct Action*, 22–23.

Hansen saw France as a vastly more politicized place than Canada. Nothing highlighted this contrast more than the large labour demonstrations that seemed to regularly flood the streets of Paris with thousands of protestors. While the size of the crowds was impressive, the militancy of small groups of autonomists particularly influenced her as they were hostile to the established communist movement, often drawing strong parallels to anarchist, post-Marxist, and Situationist ideas. At one protest, Hansen followed a group of black-clad autonomists as they attacked storefronts and skirmished with the police and photographers. As the current of the protest changed, she found herself attached to a contingent fleeing a police pursuit. The chase resulted in the occupation of the Gare de l'Est train station, where protestors used the station's lockers to construct a series of barricades that they defended with rocks and Molotov cocktails. Transfixed, Hansen watched the militants return barrages of teargas canisters while being ignored by commuters, many of whom were preoccupied with "casually looting" the exposed shop-goods. Hansen explained this experience with the autonomists as one that displayed, in the starkest terms, the poverty of radicalism in Canada, arguing that "[a]fter that day I had no desire to return home to a country where revolutionaries seemed to be an endangered species."<sup>270</sup>

French autonomism was not the only radical environment through which Hansen passed. From a contact in London, she connected with a French support network for the West German guerrilla group, the Red Army Faction. For nearly six months, she lived and worked with the collective in their Paris apartment, putting out leaflets, aiding RAF fugitives, and traveling to West Germany to do court support for RAF-related trials. Like Taylor's sojourn in the Bay Area, tangled and contradictory political experiences characterized Hansen's time with the RAF support group. The RAF provided her with a prolonged period of exposure to the theory and practice of urban guerrilla politics, as well as the excitement of living a life completely defined by militant activity. What struck Hansen most was the effort and dedication that her flatmates put into their political work. They seemed to live and breathe the politics of armed struggle and urban guerrilla warfare. Daily life in the apartment was one in which the mundane tasks of support work merged with long discussions on the limitations of legalized protest and the centrality of

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<sup>270</sup> Ann Hansen, *Direct Action*, 28. In separate interviews, Jill Bend and Marcy Toms also noted how exposure to radical European movements while traveling had a tendency to make Canadian political experiences seem less militant. Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012; Marcy Toms, interview with author, 8 February 2011.

urban guerrilla activity. While she objected to RAF's use of political assassination and targeted personal attacks, as well as what she saw as a misplaced affiliation with the Soviet Union, she nevertheless concluded that urban guerrilla collectives could play a fundamental role in the global struggle against capitalism. Willing and capable to conduct such work, she made a conscious decision to throw herself into guerrilla politics.<sup>271</sup>

Although Hansen wanted to join radical elements in Europe, a RAF fighter who was hiding-out in the support group's apartment dissuaded her of the idea. After explaining her doubts about the effectiveness of creating an urban guerrilla group in Canada, the RAF militant argued that Hansen would be most effective working in a country and a culture that she came from. If all the potential militants flocked to one centre of struggle, the guerrilla argued, resistance would never spread. Capitalism and imperialism were global phenomena and as such, they needed to be contested everywhere, particularly in North America. It was not the advice Hansen wanted to hear, but she gradually came to accept the suggestion.<sup>272</sup>

By the turn of the New Year, she left Europe and resettled in Toronto. Building on her recent work in aiding RAF political prisoners, Hansen began working with the city's prison abolitionist movement. Like Vancouver, Toronto's prison abolition projects, developed by anarchists and anti-authoritarians, acted as an important hub for anarchist politics and activism. It was through this community that Hansen met Brent Taylor, who was in Toronto after returning from an anti-nuclear convergence in New Hampshire. The two activists hit it off immediately. Through swapping stories, personal experiences, and political perspectives, they bonded over a shared desire to initiate urban guerrilla action in Canada. Sympathetic to the experiences, political concerns, and activity of guerrilla groups in Europe and the Americas, Hansen and Taylor disagreed with the Marxist-Leninist orientation of many of these factions and rejected directing harm against human subjects as a form of symbolic political pressure or revenge. Instead, they sought to develop a clandestine network that would use sabotage, which in this instance took the form of armed assaults against physical infrastructure, to contest the development of

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<sup>271</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Hansen, *Direct Action*, 25–29.

<sup>272</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Hansen, *Direct Action*, 29.

specific projects. At the same time, these attacks were also forms of propaganda whose aim was to radicalize the broader activist community.<sup>273</sup>

Travel abroad provided Hansen and Taylor with their first direct experiences with armed struggle and clandestine living, but it was in Vancouver that the two worked to develop their own urban guerrilla collective. Doug Stewart, an anarchist from Vancouver who had worked with Taylor on a range of anti-nuclear projects over the preceding years, also joined the group. Shortly after Hansen's arrival in Vancouver in 1980, the three formalized their commitment to move towards underground activity. While they debated who else might be pulled into the fold, what targets they would approach, and when they would act, they agreed that the intervening time would be best spent learning, planning, and preparing for armed action.<sup>274</sup> While a single action could be completed without much trouble, the desire to build a durable urban guerrilla force that could operate over an extended period of time required an extensive amount of organization. As a result, between 1980 and 1982, the collective constructed the beginnings of an underground infrastructure consisting of an accumulation of money, vehicles, weapons, and other tools, as well as an immaterial set of skills, practices, and forms of technical knowledge.

Because of the illegal and clandestine nature of urban guerrilla activity, the collective members needed to be able to move through the institutions and spaces of public life without revealing their true identities. As a result, the collective put an enormous amount of time and energy into creating and stealing identification documents. Low-risk ventures, such as renting a hotel room or an automobile under a false name, could be accomplished with stolen identification. But actions that garnered more scrutiny, such as renting an apartment or applying for a passport based on false information, required the construction of an entirely new set of identity documents. Members of the collective therefore appropriated the personal information of other people in order to apply for new documents that would pair their face and description with someone else's name. The success of such a project hinged on studying the application process for a given document to find the required personal information, and

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<sup>273</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012.

<sup>274</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 9 March 2012, and 13 March 2012.



then going and gathering it. To do so, the collective developed two approaches. The first involved creating and conducting fraudulent surveys designed to tease out the participant's personal information, such as date and place of birth, gender, mother's maiden name, and other vital statistics. The second approach was riskier, but occasionally yielded extensive amounts of information. Twice a week, Taylor would crawl through the dumpsters of the American consulate where he would encounter travel document applications, many of which contained the type of personal information the collective was looking for. Even at the time it seemed unbelievable to Taylor that this information would be discarded in this way, yet he maintains that the garbage receptacles were easily accessible and full of sensitive personal information that no one had bothered to destroy.<sup>275</sup> As a result, the collective constructed and used a range of fake identity documents over the next several years.

The collective also began to develop skills for theft, robbery, and the use of firearms, all of which were standard practices for underground groups. While this work was an important part of the group's underground infrastructure, it also demonstrated how guerrilla activity engendered patterns of illegality in which one form of criminal action required additional criminal acts. Robberies were a prototypical example of this process. Generally, robberies involve the use of weapons, preferably firearms. However, not all firearms were equal to this task. Although it was a relatively simple matter to purchase a long-gun in Canada, rifles and shotguns were poor implements for robbing a store. Intimidating without a doubt, they were nearly impossible to conceal and therefore conspicuous. The best heists were ones done quickly and quietly, and for this handguns were a by far better option. However, it was difficult to acquire handguns, so the collective decided to steal the weapons they needed to conduct their robberies.<sup>276</sup>

Taylor acquired two handguns through shoplifting. First at an army surplus store, and later at a more conventional firearms retailer, he waited until the store clerks were distracted before opening unlocked display cases and absconding with the pistols. The collective also organized a more dramatic acquisition when they robbed the home of a local gun collector and shooting enthusiast. After casing the subject's residence for several weeks, some members of the collective entered the house while the owners

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<sup>275</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 13 March 2012.

<sup>276</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

were absent and left with twenty-four firearms, including handguns, rifles, and combat-style shotguns.<sup>277</sup> In addition to firearms, armed robbery also required the use of vehicles that could provide a subtle space from which to survey a particular target, as well as provide the means of quickly escaping after the action took place. This meant the collective needed vehicles that could not be traced back to them. In this sense, armed robbery involved the illegal appropriation, possession, and use of weapons, and the theft and illegal possession of automobiles.

Using a mixture of stolen weapons and vehicles, different members of the collective conducted two high-profile robberies in Vancouver. One, as told by Ann Hansen, involved robbing a grocery store employee while he was on route to deposit the day's cash at the bank.<sup>278</sup> The second robbery, which involved Taylor and at least one additional member of the collective, targeted a different grocery store. With a high amount of cash circulating through their tills every day, grocery stores made for tempting targets. At the same time, large outlets often used armoured car services to securely transport their cash from the store to the bank. The ideal procedure for these locations was to conduct the robbery just prior to arrival of the armoured car service in order to maximize the amount of cash available. Normally, this was made more difficult by the fact that the money remained in a secure location until the arrival of the armed guards.<sup>279</sup> However, during their surveillance of possible targets, Taylor and others found a store in which employees took an unconventional approach to the movement of money:

What we did see them do, the manager, he actually had a shopping cart full of all the money for the [armoured car service] and they would move it—and this was crazy—they would move it from the office into place on the main floor ready for when the [guards] come, so that those guys could just come and easily, just kind of lift it out of the shopping cart and walk back out of the store. And we're going, like, 'this is just incredible.' Like, we don't even have to go into their office. They've brought it out of the office and it's sitting in a shopping cart. It's ridiculous, right? And the manager and the assistant would walk it out, you know, ten minutes before. Sort of like that's their security, the two of them are pushing their shopping cart....So, we just went in and walked along, and just pulled out the guns when we are right in their face, and they just freeze, and we take

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<sup>277</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013. For Hansen's telling of the robbery, see *Direct Action*, 139–144.

<sup>278</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 125–133.

<sup>279</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

it out of the shopping cart...it couldn't have been more convenient in a sense.<sup>280</sup>

Leaving behind the cheques and the coin, the collective took over forty thousand dollars from the heist.<sup>281</sup>

As Taylor's recollection illustrated, conducting a robbery was not just about weapons and will power. One also needed an understanding of how the security protocols of grocery stores operated, when they were likely to have the most amount of money on site, and how to enter and leave the store without being apprehended, injured, or identified. However, solutions and strategies to address those problems were not necessarily self-evident. Despite being committed to the ideals of armed struggle, the collective had not lived lives in which the best practices of armed robbery were common knowledge. The same was true for the other forms of criminal activity that marked the construction of an underground infrastructure. This meant that Taylor, Hansen, and Stewart had to learn these skills, processes, and forms of knowledge.

Negotiated through the intersection of class, politics, and an eclectic array of instructional resources, the collective developed forms of self-study and practice in order to learn the technical details of guerrilla life. For Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart, all of whom grew up in middle-class families and had experiences with post-secondary education, reading and research offered a critical means of accumulating criminal skills. As Hansen and Taylor both noted, they reflected processes of learning that fused together particular forms of knowledge and skill with particular class positions. For Taylor, these discussions highlighted the limitations of middle-class experience:

We use to think that if we were from a real working-class, or a lower working-class, it's more part of their culture to know mechanical stuff and also low-level crime stuff. You know, from just sort of growing up. Your dad's been in the pen or gone to jail, you know, that whole sort of milieu of lower working-class people...Whereas we don't come from that. Our background was more middle class and so it was something we definitely had to deliberately go out and learn.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

<sup>281</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

<sup>282</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

Through their prison abolition work, the collective made a range of acquaintances and friendships with men and women who were, in Taylor's words, from the "criminal class." For Taylor, these connections were one strategy to overcome the obstacles of middle-class existence mentioned above. "We were really aware that if we had people from the criminal class or the lower class that we knew, they'd sort of know this stuff themselves. In a revolutionary situation where people from that milieu were involved it immediately increases your ability to have good organization."<sup>283</sup> However, despite these hopes, extensive connections between the collective and radical criminal elements never materialized.

Instead of bypassing the perceived limitations of their class, Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart put their privilege to use as best they could by drawing on a range of educational experiences. As Hansen notes, the collective turned towards the use of "books and libraries as resources for learning criminal skills—as opposed to the real-life resources of other criminals."<sup>284</sup> Here, Taylor's experiences at local libraries dramatically reflected the connection between class privilege and criminal learning. "I spent hours at the public library, hours at the UBC library, the SFU library. I was lucky in the sense that both my parents having been university professors, I was very familiar with how to get into the stacks, into the journals, and stuff like that." Like many forms of institutional research, using the library was not only based on a familiarity with the space itself, but also on a personal confidence in the system as a whole, a "belief that you will find [what you are looking for] if you keep digging for it."<sup>285</sup> In this sense, there was nothing alienating, intimidating, or out of place about using the library system to support the organization of armed struggle.

While not everything the collective needed could be found in the library, these forms of research demonstrated the centrality of reading to the construction of an underground infrastructure. In terms of specific resources, trade manuals and other forms of professional writing offered the collective a critical means of learning and applying new revolutionary skills. This was particularly true in relation to auto-theft and demolition. In order to learn how to steal vehicles, Hansen recalls spending hours in the

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<sup>283</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

<sup>284</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 90.

<sup>285</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

library pouring over electrical manuals that described the design and functionality of vehicle ignition systems. In the end, what she learned was that even if she was able to “hot wire” an engine into turning on, most cars had steering column locks that prevented the wheel from being moved until the keys were in the ignition. These manuals were an excellent resource for further understanding the challenges of auto theft, but they failed to reveal the required solutions.<sup>286</sup>

Instead, the collective found answers in the pages of right-wing periodicals such as *Soldier of Fortune*. In addition to being a perennial source of advice on topics relating to military and security technologies, the magazine also included advertisements for pamphlets and guides on lock-picking and automotive mechanics.<sup>287</sup> As a result, Hansen was soon in possession of *Involuntary Repossession: Or, In the Steal of the Night*, a manual that instructed the reader in using a mechanical device called “fingers” that could engage the ignition without triggering the steering lock. Ostensibly designed for repossession experts, the guide was a valuable resource for anyone interested in stealing vehicles.<sup>288</sup> In addition to auto theft, the collective turned to a mixture of academic and professional writing in order to learn the basics of demolition. Here, the collective drew information from scientific journals as well as established manuals such as the *Blasters’ Handbook*.<sup>289</sup> Doug Stewart, who had studied physics at UBC, used a range of resources, as well as his own longstanding interest in electronics, to construct the timing devices that the collective used in their bombings.<sup>290</sup>

The collective also turned to the publishing efforts of left-wing and radical social movements. In this, they had a wide range of options. For a detailed overview of combat skills, military knowledge, tactics, and strategy, the collective turned to Carlos Marighella’s *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*. Reprinted locally by Vancouver’s Pulp

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<sup>286</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 90.

<sup>287</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

<sup>288</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013, 13 March 2012; Hansen, *Direct Action*, 92–93. For the original publication, see John L. Russel, *Involuntary Repossession: Or, In the Steal of the Night* (Bolder, CO: Paladin Press, 1979).

<sup>289</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013. Numerous versions of the *Blasters’ Handbook* exist. Du Pont published the most established version and the one likely to have been used by the collective. For example, see Arthur La Motte, *Blasters’ Handbook* (Wilmington, Del: Du Pont de Nemours & Company, Explosives Department, 1938).

<sup>290</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013; Hansen, *Direct Action*, 90.

Press since at least 1974, Marighella's text was an influential primer on the specific practices and forms of urban guerrilla activity. Written within the context's of Brazil's revolutionary left, the text was less about the historical or specific political dynamics that local activists faced, and focused more on the desired behaviour, skills, procedures, and modes of organization that characterized urban forms of armed struggle. The instruction ranged widely, from the importance of shooting and marksmanship, to the purpose of mobility and mechanized transportation, to providing specific suggestions for the procurement of supplies and equipment.<sup>291</sup>

Similar forms of military instruction could be taken from both the anarchist and women's liberation movements. *Towards a Citizens' Militia: Anarchist Alternatives to NATO and the Warsaw Pact* offered an extensive series of discussions on how to conduct combat operations within urban environments. Written by English and Spanish anarchists involved in the anti-Franco resistance movement, *Towards a Citizens' Militia* focused on the specific techniques of action and procedure. Through textual narration and drawn images, the manual described methods for demolishing electrical systems, derailing trains, disabling fuel depots, destroying bridges, as well as how to organize secure political cells, how best to handle oneself in a police interrogation, and how to approach the prospect of incarceration.<sup>292</sup> *The Women's Gun Pamphlet*, which was part women's liberation manifesto and part technical guide, was also a useful resource on all the basic aspects of gun safety, use, and classification. Jill Bend, who was often a part of the collective's discussions regarding these issues, was particularly fond of the pamphlet. Originally published by radical feminists in Seattle, Bend reproduced it for local consumption in Vancouver under the altered title, *Arm the Womyn*.<sup>293</sup>

*The Minimanuel*, *Towards a Citizens' Militia*, and the *Women's Gun Pamphlet/Arm the Womyn* are only a few of the many left-wing instruction manuals available to prospective guerrillas during the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, they offer an important

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<sup>291</sup> Carlos Marighella, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* (Vancouver: Pulp Press, 1974).

<sup>292</sup> 1st. of May Group, *Towards a Citizens' Militia: Anarchist Alternatives to NATO and the Warsaw Pact* (Over the Water, Sanday, Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1980). For commentary on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May Group, see Christi, *Granny Made Me an Anarchist*; Albert Meltzer, *A New World in Our Hearts: The Faces of Spanish Anarchism* (Over the Water, Sanday, Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1978); Albert Meltzer, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels: Sixty Years of Commonplace Life and Anarchist Agitation* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996).

<sup>293</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

entry point into understanding how local activists in Vancouver went about the process of creating an underground infrastructure that could sustain a prolonged guerrilla life. For the Direct Action collective the use of instruction manuals highlighted both the challenges and opportunities of constructing an armed political offensive on Canadian soil. The production of this literature, however, was also based on a much wider set of beliefs. As the publication of radical manuals suggest, revolutionaries in Brazil, the United Kingdom, Spain, Seattle, and Vancouver approached their respective projects on the shared assumption that armed action was not only ideologically, historically, and theoretically significant, but also envisioned that activist communities around the world needed forms of practical instruction and applied knowledge in order to actually carry out these forms of action. In this sense, the activity of the Direct Action collective demonstrates the ways in which a politically diverse and transnational circulation of texts shaped the application of armed struggle in Vancouver.

Focusing on the development and significance of armed struggle as a topic of political debate, a cultural ideal, and an applied form of activism offers historians another method for exploring the resurgence of anarchism in the wake of the long sixties. In Vancouver, anarchist engagements with the political contours and cultural meanings of armed struggle and guerrilla activity were inseparable from an older series of debates that marked the activity of local New Leftists. In this sense, debates over political violence add an additional facet to anarchism's conflicting relationship with other forms of local left activity in the city. At the same time, the wide geographical scope of guerrilla action both during and after the long sixties meant that local activists interested in armed struggle had access to a spatially fluid set of radical ideas and movements. Within the contours of aboveground movements, nothing highlighted this oscillation between the local and the extra-local more than the anarchist press. As projects that were both transnationally focused and locally situated, *Open Road* and *Resistance* engendered the politics of armed struggle by amplifying and disseminating the global activity of guerrilla groups, while simultaneously using ideas of solidarity to assert that activists in Vancouver were active participants in this wider militant turn. At the same time, the experiences and activity of the Direct Action collective demonstrate how local activists not only engaged with these movements directly, but also began the process of putting guerrilla politics into practice in Vancouver at the beginning of the 1980s. If the networks of the anarchist press connected local activists with the activity of guerrilla groups from

around the world, then Taylor and Hansen's political travels highlighted a more immediate and proximate connection to the activity of armed groups in the United States and Western Europe. While travel abroad acted as a radicalizing experience for both activists, it was Direct Action's construction of an underground infrastructure that enabled Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart to begin to apply the politics and organization of armed struggle in Canada.



## Chapter 4

### **Conflicting Currents: Anarchism, Environmentalism, and the Politics of Hydroelectric Power in British Columbia, 1970–1982**

In the spring of 1982, Direct Action bombed a section of the partially completed Cheekeye-Dunsmuir hydroelectric transmission line on Vancouver Island. Implemented by British Columbia Hydro, Cheekeye-Dunsmuir was part of a slate of new energy projects proposed by energy planners for the province over the previous decade, including nuclear power, new hydroelectric dams, and a growing emphasis on the extraction and combustion of coal. These development initiatives provoked a range of dissenting opinions and protest from established environmental organizations, including Greenpeace, the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control, and the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility. At the same time, projects such as Cheekeye-Dunsmuir also generated new activist currents. Here, small ad-hoc groups such as the Lasqueti Island Steering Committee and the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance mobilized to contest the construction of the transmission line at the community level.<sup>294</sup> It was within this emerging political climate that Direct Action detonated a series of explosive devices,

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<sup>294</sup> In addition to anarchist currents, this chapter considers the work of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance and the Lasqueti Island Steering Committee. However, these were not the only activist groups involved in the debate over the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to consider the full opposition to the line, other collectives and ad hoc groups such as the Mid-Island Coalition on Energy, Citizens for a Public Hearing on Cheekeye-Dunsmuir, First Step Alliance, the Texada Island Environmental Action Group, and the Powel River Anti-Pollution Society were active in opposing the project. For examples, see Mid-Island Coalition on Energy, "Cheekeye-Dunsmuir 500 Kilovolt Transmission Line," File 1-26, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, Rare Books and Special Collections (RBSC), University of British Columbia (UBC); and Citizens for a Public Hearing on Cheekeye-Dunsmuir, "The Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Power Line: Boon or Bane for B.C. Residents?," File 1.20, Box 1, Ann Hansen Collection, Anarchist Archive, University of Victoria (UVIC). For an account that describes the breadth of groups opposing the project, see A.G. Pressley (Sunshine Coast Regional District) to Carl Rising-Moore, 22 November 1979, File 1-26, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC.

destroying millions of dollars worth of electrical equipment at a partially completed substation in the small town of Qualicum Beach. In doing so, the collective not only sought to slowdown and obstruct the construction of Cheekeye-Dunsmuir, but also hoped to inspire the broader environmental movement to take up the tactics of sabotage and militant direct action.<sup>295</sup>

This chapter seeks to explain why and how BC Hydro's energy policies engendered these patterns of environmental activism, and to uncover the political and cultural contours of that dissent. Focusing on the controversy over the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir transmission line explains why Direct Action bombed BC Hydro, while also tying that act of sabotage into the broader development and diversity of environmental activism in British Columbia during the 1970s and 1980s. In doing so, it argues that provincial energy policies generated new waves of environmental activism that bridged perspectives on ecological degradation, democratic process, and a wide reaching debate on the organization and meaning of industrial modernity. In their critiques of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir project, activists argued that the project would result in the despoliation of wilderness and new forms of industrial pollution. At the same time, activists did more than focus on the project's immediate environmental effects. They also expanded their criticism in order to challenge the political, economic, and technocratic authority of BC Hydro as a modernizing force. In this, a number of radicals who were part of Vancouver's anarchist resurgence joined them. While some members of the Direct Action collective carried out the bombing of the Dunsmuir substation as a means of resisting BC Hydro, the collective was part of a broader anarchist engagement against the line. Here, members of the collective worked alongside Jill Bend and other anarchist radicals to support public forms of protest against BC Hydro's energy projects, citing their contribution to a global industrial system that tied capitalism, imperialism, and ecological degradation together into an intersecting framework. Indeed, by the early 1980s, aspects of Vancouver's anarchist resurgence were working closely with environmentalist groups in order to try and resist the construction of the transmission line. In doing so, they demonstrated a broader coming together of the anarchist resurgence and dynamic expansion of environmental activism. Not only do these forms

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<sup>295</sup> There has been no extensive historical work on the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir bombing. The most detailed account can be found in Hansen's biography. See Hansen, *Direct Action*, 59–61, 136–138, and 194–213.

of activist interaction extend our understanding of the history of environmental dissent in the province by virtue of its associations with anarchist politics, but they also provide another facet in our emerging understanding of anarchism's place within the shifting political landscape of the 1970s and 1980s.

While the immediate origins of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line lay in BC Hydro's desire to modify the provincial energy system over the course of the 1970s, it also reflected a series of industrial and political patterns that stretched back to the 1940s. As Matthew Evenden has demonstrated, the expansion in hydroelectric power, both in British Columbia and elsewhere in the nation, emerged from the economic and political dynamics of the Second World War. While private industrial firms and utilities had long turned to rivers and dams in order to generate electricity, the prospect of total war changed the organization of hydroelectric production dramatically. As an important source of power for industrial production, hydroelectricity became an increasingly critical military resource. Like other strategic resources, it was subject to federal laws that centralized and rationalized its production under the guidance of Ottawa. While the end of the war transformed the landscape of industrial production once again, reducing federal regulation and extending provincial authority over the organization of electrical power, the post-war years did not see a reduction in the importance of hydroelectric power. Rather, as Evenden notes, the state and corporate planners saw the enthusiasm and support for hydroelectric initiatives and their close connection to other forms of industrial development as an important tool for constructing an economically robust and culturally modern society in the post-war years.<sup>296</sup>

The work of Tina Loo has engaged with uncovering the specific ideological contours upon which this hydroelectric development took place in British Columbia. For Loo, the hydroelectric initiatives of the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett reflected the solidification of a post-war high-modern ethos, a broad ideological framework in which claims to scientific objectivity, neutrality, and rationality informed

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<sup>296</sup> Matthew Evenden, "Mobilizing Rivers: Hydro-Electricity, the State, and World War II in Canada," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 5 (2009): 845–850. As Evenden notes, one of the most critical industrial uses of hydroelectric power was in the processing of aluminum. See Matthew Evenden, "Aluminum, Commodity Chains, and the Environmental History of the Second World War," *Environmental History* 16 (January 2011): 69–93. For a broader treatment of the history of hydroelectricity in the province, see Matthew Evenden, *Fish Versus Power: An Environmental History of the Fraser River* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

large-scale and technologically intensive development projects. As a result, the expansion of hydroelectric power in BC in the post-war years displayed a prototypically high-modernist moment in which the state-led energy projects were to become the beating “heart” of a prosperous capitalist future.<sup>297</sup> However, as Loo notes, these industrial projects created extensive social and environmental conflicts. This was particularly the case in instances where dam reservoirs submerged lands that had long been occupied and used by Aboriginal and rural settler communities. Not only did these projects take away land, local economic resources, and the physical manifestations of memory, history, and collective culture embedded within these local environments, but they also created new landscapes with unforeseen characteristics. As a result, the public’s reaction to these projects was often outside the expectations imagined by bureaucrats and planners.<sup>298</sup>

Understandably, such modernization projects routinely produced patterns of resentment, alienation, and anger at the local level, as rural communities struggled to negotiate the complex and shifting consequences of high-modernity.<sup>299</sup> While authors such as Arn Keeling, John-Henry Harter, Frank Zelko, Gordon Hak, Richard Rajala, and Jeremy Wilson have provided critical investigations of the development of environmental politics in the province, there has been no serious consideration of the relationship between BC Hydro and the expansion of environmental movements.<sup>300</sup> Likewise, there has been no deep historical attention to the cross-fertilization between the province’s

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<sup>297</sup> Tina Loo, “People in the Way: Modernity, Environment, and Society on the Arrow Lakes,” *BC Studies* 142/143 (Summer/Autumn 2004): 163.

<sup>298</sup> Tina Loo, “Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River,” *Environmental History* 12 (October 2007): 895–919.

<sup>299</sup> In addition to Loo’s work in the context of the Kootenay and Peace regions, Arn Keeling and Robert McDonald have also explored dissenting views on modernity and environmental change through the activism of Robert Haig-Brown. See Arn Keeling and Robert McDonald, “Profligate Province: Robert Haig-Brown and the Modernizing of British Columbia,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 7–23.

<sup>300</sup> For example, see Arn Keeling, “Urban Waste Sinks as a Natural Resource,” *Urban History Review* 34, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): 58–70; “Sink or Swim: Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in Vancouver, 1889–1975,” *BC Studies* 142/143 (Summer/Autumn 2004): 69–101; Harter, “Environmental Justice for Whom?,” 83–119; Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace*; Hak, *Capital and Labour*, 168–187; Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 135–187; Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia, 1965–96* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); and Richard Rajala, “Forests and Fish: The 1972 Coast Logging Guidelines and British Columbia’s First NDP Government,” *BC Studies* 159 (Autumn 2008): 81–120. See also Eryk Martin, “Canadian Communists and the Politics of Nature in British Columbia, 1936–1956,” *Twentieth Century Communism* 5, no. 5 (2013): 104–125.

diverse environmental movements and a resurging anarchist milieu, two phenomena that developed simultaneously out of the long sixties. This chapter begins the process of filling these historiographical gaps, focusing first on the relationship between the politics of provincial energy planning and environmental protest before moving on to consider how these patterns of protest intersected with and were shaped by an environmentally engaged anarchist resurgence.

While the economic, political, and cultural specificities of the 1940s were critical in expanding the scope and influence of hydroelectric technologies in the province, the most immediate origins of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line lay in a series of debates over development and organization of energy resources during the 1970s. As a part of this engagement, the government of British Columbia created the BC Energy Board (BCEB) in 1970 in order to gather data and commission studies on energy-related issues relevant to the province. In particular, the BCEB's initial mandate focused on the feasibility of expanding the generating capacity of existing power plants, the potential for new hydroelectric dams and thermal generating stations, the expansion of the provincial transmission system, as well as exploring the possibility of creating new or enhanced electrical exchanges with Alberta and the north-western United States. It also emphasized the need to study the methods of power planning in the province with an eye towards developing new forms of bureaucratic organization.<sup>301</sup>

Publishing its recommendations in 1972, the BCEB argued that the province, like much of the western world, was experiencing a massive increase in the use of electricity caused by mounting population levels and the escalating per capita consumption of energy associated with rising standards of living.<sup>302</sup> The BCEB did not see the growth of energy use and economic expansion to decline any time in the foreseeable future. Instead, it argued that its forecasting and economic prediction models pointed toward a bright and progressive future. Of course, there were challenges to overcome and risks to be mitigated. The newest of these was an emerging environmental consciousness among the public that, for the BCEB, had increased the general social awareness over the "adverse effects which some types of resource development can produce on the

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<sup>301</sup> British Columbia Energy Board (BCEB), *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply* (Vancouver: BCEB 31 August 1972), Box 1, File 1-8, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC.

<sup>302</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 1–2.

environment.” As a result, BCEB argued that it would be necessary to consider both the environmental impact of power projects and the opinions of the public to greater extent than had been done in the past.<sup>303</sup> Not only was the BCEB confident that it could manage these new public expectations, but it also asserted that the growing prominence of an environmental consciousness would not conflict with the desire for continuous economic growth and the “progressively larger power projects” that increased development required.<sup>304</sup> The BCEB based this assumption on the understanding that environmental degradation was primarily a technical problem, one that could be mitigated by sound judgment, rational planning, and technological expertise. As a result, the same resources of technocratic planning that buttressed the ability to predict future economic conditions and estimate new energy requirements were at work in the mitigation of environmental challenges and risks.

Arguing that environmental manipulation was at the core of human progress, the BCEB wholeheartedly agreed with its technical consultants that the key difference of modern life was the realization that “man can have the best of both worlds, the economic advantage of resource development, while continuing to preserve or enhance the pleasantness of his surroundings.”<sup>305</sup> From this thoroughly high-modern perspective, the BCEB maintained that it was “confident that no significant reduction in the use of electricity in this Province will result from the present concern for the environment.” Instead, they speculated that new technologies developed in order to mitigate certain environmental challenges, such as the electric car, could signal a substantial increase in the use of electricity. Therefore, the BCEB created its vision for future energy planning on the presumption of prolonged economic growth and increased energy demand.<sup>306</sup>

The BCEB was confident that the mainland portion of the province had the resources and infrastructure to meet these projected requirements. However, the same could not be said of Vancouver Island. Although there were a number of local generating stations, the island still imported additional electricity from the mainland to fulfill its total energy demand. This energy moved through a series of transmission lines and cables

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<sup>303</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 3.

<sup>304</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 3.

<sup>305</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 29.

<sup>306</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 27.

threaded across the convoluted and island-strewn passages of saltwater that separated the large island from the BC mainland. The BCEB argued that, as the demand for energy grew, it was only a matter of time before this infrastructure would no longer be able to supply an adequate amount of electricity. Based on its 1972 predictions, this energy shortfall would begin in 1981. To solve this problem, the BCEB's technical consultants proposed to construct a series of new overhead transmission lines that would enhance the volume of electricity that could be moved from the mainland to Vancouver Island. However, the officials in charge of the BCEB, in conjunction with senior officials at BC Hydro, rejected the findings of its consultants, citing concerns over the line's construction and maintenance.<sup>307</sup>

Instead, the BCEB advocated for the construction of a major generating facility on Vancouver Island itself. Working within this parameter, the board highlighted two main options: either the creation of a large coal-fired generating station supplied by developing a new coal mine in the interior of the province, or the construction of a nuclear power plant.<sup>308</sup> Rejecting the findings of its own consultants and raising the spectre of establishing a nuclear power plant on Vancouver Island was both audacious and politically divisive. In the wake of these events, one of BCEB's own board members, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries, H. L. Keenlyside, resigned in protest. Complaining bitterly at the suddenness of this change in course, Keenlyside maintained that the BCEB developed and approved these proposals a mere three weeks before the publication of the final report. Submitting his own analysis to the government, Keenlyside sided with the findings of the BCEB's technical consultants who stressed the extraordinary startup costs of the nuclear option, while adding his concerns over the safety and reliability of nuclear power.<sup>309</sup>

While the disturbing potential for nuclear power remained alive within the minds of its critics throughout the decade, the proposal died in the wake of a worsening

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<sup>307</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 35–38.

<sup>308</sup> BCEB, *Report on Electric Energy Resources and Future Power Supply*, 35–38. Conversations on the suitability of nuclear power were also percolating among segments of the local business community on Vancouver Island. In 1971, at the behest of the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce, Atomic Energy Canada produced a summary guide that outlined how nuclear power might be developed on Vancouver Island. See Atomic Energy Canada Limited, *Nuclear Power for Vancouver Island* (Ottawa: [n.d]), File 1-29, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC.

<sup>309</sup> Dr. H. L. Keenlyside, "British Columbia Energy Board Report: Dissenting Statement by Dr. Keenlyside," File 1-8, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC.

economic climate. In fact, inflation, rising constructions costs, and more tepid energy growth forecasts that became a staple concern within BC Hydro planning circles by the middle years of the decade scuttled the entire plan for further generation projects on Vancouver Island.<sup>310</sup> Because coal-fired thermal plants were less expensive to develop, BC Hydro argued that they could help to augment hydroelectric power generation.<sup>311</sup> In addition to building cheaper generating plants, savings could be made by reducing the number of these facilities by redistributing the movement of electricity through expanding BC Hydro's network of transmission lines. This was exactly the course of action proposed for Vancouver Island. As a result, Hydro re-established the idea of transporting power from mainland generating facilities to Vancouver Island by the second half of the decade.<sup>312</sup>

This time, however, BC Hydro proposed a mixture of overhead power lines and submarine cables in order connect the Cheekeye substation north of Vancouver to the Dunsmuir substation on the east coast of Vancouver Island. Although Hydro insisted that the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir transmission line was central to the energy needs of Vancouver Island, it could not avoid concluding that the project came with a number of environmental challenges. While in other instances the utility generally argued that hydroelectricity was a "non-polluting" form of energy, it was forced to admit in its impact assessments that the construction of the transmission line could result in some forms of pollution and other adverse effects. For example, the light grade oil that insulated the submarine cables that transferred the electricity under the Strait of Georgia meant that a rupture in the cable could lead to an oil spill.<sup>313</sup> Once BC Hydro completed the right-of-way and built the electrical towers, maintenance procedures called for the periodic spraying of herbicides that would keep vegetation from interfering with the transmission lines.<sup>314</sup> Finally, once the lines began moving electricity, they would also produce

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<sup>310</sup> BC Hydro Task Force on Future Generation and Transmission Requirements, *Alternatives: 1975 to 1990* (Vancouver: BC Hydro, 1975), 6–7.

<sup>311</sup> BC Hydro Task Force, *Alternatives*, 7–12.

<sup>312</sup> BC Hydro Task Force, *Alternatives*, 111–112.

<sup>313</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply, 1982–1996* (Victoria: BC Hydro, 1978), 3–20.

<sup>314</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply*, 3–22.



additional physical effects including “ozone, audible noise, radio and TV interference, low voltage induced shocks, and biological effects of electric fields.”<sup>315</sup>

While these constituted potential environmental impacts, BC Hydro dismissed their seriousness by claiming that they were either unlikely to occur or that the effects were benign. While oil spills were possible, the specific form of oil used in the submarine cables was stated as posing no threat to water quality. BC Hydro assured the public that its herbicides fully complied with the regulatory frameworks set by federal and provincial statutes and claimed that specific chemicals such as 2-4-D had the same toxicity levels as table salt.<sup>316</sup> The potential for electronic interference and high-voltage shocks would be mitigated through proper construction procedures. While the utility agreed that transmission lines produced electro-magnetic fields, they argued that the fields had no harmful affect on human health.<sup>317</sup> However, the utility was unable to deny that the line’s construction would lead to serious aesthetic ramifications for the surrounding landscape. In fact, for BC Hydro, the “visual impact” was the most problematic environmental consequence of building Cheekeye-Dunsmuir, because “the cleared transmission corridor with towers and lines could present a unwelcome intrusion on the natural landscape.”<sup>318</sup> It would be impossible to find a route that would result in no environmental impacts, yet planning documents stressed a commitment to finding the least “obtrusive” power-corridor possible, provided it was secure and did not dramatically escalate costs.<sup>319</sup>

To opponents of the line, Hydro’s language of impact minimization tragically missed the point of their concerns. Minor alterations in the selection of the route could not answer the charge that some saw the project as fundamentally disruptive. Few commentators were as vivid in their description of these potential transformations as Howard White, a resident of Maderia Park on the Sechelt Peninsula, an area through

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<sup>315</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply*, 3–17.

<sup>316</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply*, 3–22; BC Hydro and Power Authority, “Regulations Governing B.C. Hydro’s Use of Herbicides on Powerline Right-of-ways,” (1977): 3, in *Cheekeye to Dunsmuir 500 kV Transmission Line: Route Selection Study, Phase 1, Appendices*, Beak Consultants Ltd. and Associates for BC Hydro (Vancouver: British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, 1978).

<sup>317</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply*, 3–17.

<sup>318</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply*, 3–16.

<sup>319</sup> BC Hydro, *Vancouver Island Power Supply*, 3–16.

which BC Hydro proposed the line should pass. Tracing one of the project's proposed routes, White narrated the ways in which the line's 400 meter wide right-of-way and its twin row of 90 meter towers would create dramatic transformations in a number of environments, arguing that it would

parallel the shoreline of Salmon Inlet for many miles, destroying that fascinating waterway as a scenic resource. It would march over the highest part of the Sechelt Peninsula, leaving a scar visible all over Malaspina Strait. It would span six waterways, including the busy Sechelt Inlet flyway and Sakinaw Lake, a popular resort area. It would scar the hills of Nelson Island and turn newly-created Harry Roberts Park of Cape Cockburn into a sick joke. It would run half the length of Texada Island crossing the high mountain ridge and establishing a symbol of industrial despoliation that will be visible all over Georgia Strait. Then as a crowning touch it would cross Sabine Channel and Bull Passage, turning one of the most singularly spectacular Gulf Island sights into a jumble of steel towers and fluorescent balls before invading the pristine rural community of Lasqueti Island.<sup>320</sup>

At the center of White's criticism was the notion that the utility would usher in a pattern of desecration in which spaces understood to be natural, pristine, and beautiful would be transformed into grotesquely modern versions of themselves. This process of "industrial despoliation," as White termed it, poignantly captured much of the anxiety surrounding the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir project. Those living in close proximity of the line rejected Cheekeye-Dunsmuir because it was seen to threaten the mental and physical relationships that individuals and communities had constructed with local environments. These critics not only raised concerns over the visual impacts that the line would have upon the landscape, but also argued that the project would produce new forms of industrial pollution, new built environments, and new patterns of social disruption.

This was certainly true for residents of Lasqueti Island, a small community of several hundred located in the middle of the Strait of Georgia, and a potential candidate to carry the power lines before they dropped into the sea to finish the last leg of their journey to the Dunsmuir station. The notion that the island might be used as a way-station for the transfer of power to Vancouver Island incensed local residents; they maintained that the presence of the project would fundamentally reshape the social and ecological dynamics of the island in ways that were antithetical to the values of the

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<sup>320</sup> Howard White, "B.C. Hydro's Horror," *Pacific Yachting* (March 1978), 11, File 2, Box 9, GR 1786, Environment and Land Use Committee Secretariat (ELUCS) Fonds, British Columbia Archives (BCA).

community. They argued against the energy policies of BC Hydro by citing local patterns of rural countercultural living that had defined the organization of island life over much of the previous decade. In particular, residents used claims to ecological and social uniqueness in order to highlight the consequences of industrial development and to contest the authority of BC Hydro and the legitimacy of its energy initiatives.

Both the biophysical nature of the island itself and the particular social and cultural history of its colonization formed the foundation of these claims. Like many of the Gulf Islands, a wave of back-to-the land migration in the early 1970s heavily shaped the Lasqueti Island community.<sup>321</sup> One of those new arrivals was Merrick Anderson. Born and raised in Winnipeg, he left home in 1969 at the age of seventeen and headed to the west coast. Melting into Vancouver's counterculture, he found a small collective of men and women who were pooling their meagre resources to create a collective living arrangement in a yet-to-be-determined rural hideaway. In 1970, Anderson and his colleagues purchased a quarter section of land on Lasqueti and began the process of re-settling it.<sup>322</sup> Others soon followed, often coming from hip urban communities on both sides of the border. Anderson remembers approximately fifty older families living on Lasqueti when he arrived in 1970 and the influx of the counterculture had increased the population to a near-bustling 280 residents by 1977.<sup>323</sup>

Anderson and his colleagues initially viewed re-settling Lasqueti as an apolitical venture. Despite their opposition to a range of dominant cultural norms, these hip settlers did not take up the political methods of countercultural New Leftists such as Yippie or the Vancouver Liberation Front. Instead of fighting to transform urban environments, Anderson and others like him rejected the social, cultural, and ecological factors of the modern city by leaving it behind. Within the first years, Anderson and his comrades quickly found that, while they felt autonomous in their rural seclusion, they were still subject to the land-use bylaws of the Power River Regional District. Concerned

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<sup>321</sup> For reflections on the island's countercultural history, see Douglas L. Hamilton and Darlene Olesko, *Accidental Eden: Hippie Days on Lasqueti Island* (Halfmoon Bay: Caitlin Press, 2014).

<sup>322</sup> Merrick Anderson, interview with author, 12 October 2012. A quarter section of land is roughly 160 acres.

<sup>323</sup> Merrick Anderson, interview with author, 12 October 2012. The hip settlement of the island is also touched on in residents' reports to BC Hydro. See Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, "Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee of the British Columbia Legislature in the Matter of the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority," (June 1978): 28, File 2, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA.

as to what might befall Lasqueti in the future, members of the local counterculture joined regional political organizations such as the Islands Trust and the Lasqueti Community Association (Community Association). For Anderson and others, these early experiences with the politics of land-use and rural development acted as a form of “consciousness raising” in which they realized that the rural atmosphere they had come to cherish was a fragile thing that particular patterns of development could easily impact.<sup>324</sup> In response, the Community Association drafted a community plan that specifically prohibited large industrial and infrastructure projects on the island.<sup>325</sup>

What emerged from this wave of initial activity were organized patterns of hip underdevelopment in which the values of a rural counterculture took precedence over the material comforts and conveniences of modern urban living. The island had a passenger-only ferry service and community members continually opposed the creation of transportation networks that would bring regular automobile traffic onto the island. There were no paved roads and no publicly provided forms of electricity. BC Hydro’s electrical grid did not extend to Lasqueti Island. Instead, an eclectic mixture of generators, wood-stoves, windmills, passive solar technologies, and other decentralized forms of generation dominated the energy supply.

It was this context of decentralization and countercultural underdevelopment that the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line crashed up against. While an intensive campaign to stop the project did not develop until 1977 and 1978, it was clear to BC Hydro by the fall of 1976 that any attempt to build the line across Lasqueti was going to be difficult. Actually clearing the forest and erecting the steel towers would be routine. Rather, the challenges lay in local hostility to industrial development and infrastructure projects. Such claims clearly vexed BC Hydro. In a 1976 memo, the utility identified the lack of ferry services, paved roads, and modern electrical systems as a set of “social problems” that indicated that islanders were intent on insulating themselves from the “consequences of technological ‘progress.’” While Hydro officials may have rolled their eyes at such a blunt rejection of the utility’s core principles, they clearly understood that this cultural and social opposition was a concrete political problem. Planners and policy makers were keenly aware that the local community would view any attempt to bring transmission

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<sup>324</sup> Merrick Anderson, interview with author, 12 October 2012.

<sup>325</sup> Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, “Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee,” 28.

lines onto Lasqueti as an aggressive intrusion that would provoke an “intensely defensive and emotional reaction.”<sup>326</sup>

In this prediction they were entirely correct. Over the course of 1977 and 1978, the pace and scope of BC Hydro’s planning increased in ways that galvanized public opinion on Lasqueti. The Community Association not only wrote a stern letter to Hydro saying that the project was not welcome, but also informed the utility that these types of projects were expressly forbidden by the island’s own community plan.<sup>327</sup> While the Community Association’s dictates had no legal authority over BC Hydro, their intransigence towards the utility reflected a set of perspectives in which the island’s specific environmental and social makeup was seen as incompatible with the modern vision provided by the utility. Writing to the Environment Land Use Committee in the summer of 1977, the Community Association argued that the threat of a transmission line was an “intolerable intrusion” that conflicted with the back-to-the-land ethos that drew the newcomers to the island in the first place. To highlight this incongruence, the Community Association reiterated the lack of basic infrastructure services as a defining aspect of the island’s “undeveloped” state. Rather than being markers of backwardness, islanders used these themes of underdevelopment to sustain the idea that Lasqueti was a “unique environment,” and one that would be despoiled by the introduction of transmission lines that would be “incompatible with the lives and lifestyles of Island residents.”<sup>328</sup>

Letters that local residents sent to the provincial government to express their opposition to the project echoed similar themes. For Delores Anthony, Lasqueti Island was the “jewel of the Pacific.” Both it and the neighbouring islands that dotted the Strait of Georgia were valuable because they were “unique” and “relatively untouched.” As such, they formed the basis of a beautiful and peaceful refuge from the modern world.<sup>329</sup> Brian Williams, also of Lasqueti, commented both on the “unspoiled”

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<sup>326</sup> R. Smith\*, “Cheekeye-Dunsmuir — Meeting with Islands Trust,” 3 November 1976, File 1, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA.

<sup>327</sup> *Lasqueti Newsletter* 4 (1978): 1, File 2, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA.

<sup>328</sup> Lasqueti Community Association to the Environment Land Use Committee, 24 June 1977, File 1, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA.

<sup>329</sup> Deloros Anthony\* to ELUC, January 1978, File 1, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA. For privacy reasons, the names of individuals who wrote letters of opposition have been changed. In these instances, the citation will place a \* next to the name in order to denote the change.

character of the area and the personal commitment of local landowners to “preserve some geographically and climactically unique, delicately balanced and inherently precious ecological gems.”<sup>330</sup> This language of underdevelopment should be seen as a political rather than literal construction. Islanders knew very well that previous patterns of human labour shaped their surroundings. Even if they were unaware of the ways in which specific indigenous or older settler communities had used the island, discerning eyes could see in the local landscape clues to the island’s past connections with the coastal forest economy. In many places, artefacts of that history remained as hip settlers came across felled cedar trees from previous logging operations, wood they made ample use of in their own home construction projects. Merrick Anderson recalled finding portions of an old wooden fence on his quarter section, wood that unknown hands cut, shaped, and assembled in an unknown time. Nevertheless, he and his colleagues eagerly put the wood back into use in setting up their new homestead.<sup>331</sup>

In this way, and in innumerable others, the island had obviously experienced use, change, and transformation. Nevertheless, for these residents, the meanings of use and development were clearly not the same. As White’s comments on the nature of “industrial despoliation” revealed, the meanings of development hinged on its specific form and context. Nothing displayed this as clearly as the disparity between the different connotations grafted on to different types of technology. This was particularly evident in the pages the *Lasqueti Newsletter*, a short run periodical that emerged out of the growing conflict with BC Hydro. Here, the newsletter referenced positive and useful representations of technology that supported the development and maintenance of settlement. Primarily, these included the tools for the production of shelter, heat, light, and transportation. Moreover, they were varied in their design and technical sophistication. Modern looking windmills with sleek blades and turbines demonstrated the power of wind energy, as did repeated drawings of humble sailboats.<sup>332</sup> One could create a comfortable domestic home featuring a wood-stove and a rain-barrel, but the *Newsletter* also provided a schematic drawing of a passive solar conductor for the generation of heat.<sup>333</sup> Other pages referenced the suitability of oil lamps, while the

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<sup>330</sup> Brian Williams\* to ELUC, 28 February 1978, File 2, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA.

<sup>331</sup> Merrick Anderson, interview with author, 12 October 2012.

<sup>332</sup> *Lasqueti Newsletter* 1 (1977): 11; *Lasqueti Newsletter* 2 (1978): 14 and 18.

<sup>333</sup> *Lasqueti Newsletter* 4 (1978): 12; and *Lasqueti Newsletter* 2 (1978): 6.

construction of a more portable lantern was also depicted, featuring a candle in a tin can.<sup>334</sup>

The *Newsletter* also depicted images of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line and its anticipated effects. Here, the technologies of high-voltage transmission lines signified an entirely different set of meanings. While the *Newsletter* described the direct and decentralized production of energy as an aid to settlement, it illustrated the technologies associated with the transmission line in ways that wrought only environmental destruction and social upheaval. A small sketch of what the line might look like when it crossed from Powell River to Nelson Island was a case in point. Here, the emphasis was on the construction of the right-of-way and the wide swath of land that it would take up. In the *Newsletter* cartoon, the line cleaves Nelson Island in half before setting out across the ocean to its next landfall.<sup>335</sup> In the same issue, another cartoon warns of a dystopian future for Lasqueti should BC Hydro be allowed to develop large-scale infrastructure projects on the island. In the newsletter's imagining, a mixture of public power and full-service ferry networks had turned the island's peaceful rurality into a chaotic urban environment defined by sleazy tourist destinations, conspicuous consumption, automobile traffic, parking lots, and the blaring hideousness of electrified signs.<sup>336</sup> These were the modern meanings of industrial development, nightmares that struck fear and anxiety into the hearts and minds of hip residents.

In addition, opposition to Cheekeye-Dunsmuir also hinged on the assumption that it would bring with it new forms of chemical and electro-magnetic pollution. Hydro adamantly argued that herbicides and electro-magnetic fields were not harmful to human bodies and local environments. Such claims were utterly unconvincing to local residents who lived in the area slated for development. For Mr. and Mrs. Rhymer, it was a known "fact" that high voltage transmission lines would mean the death of their farm. In a truly apocalyptic vision, they argued that, "pure water, atmosphere, virgin timber, pasture land and the intrinsic nature of the area would be gone forever." As a result, the Rhymers

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<sup>334</sup> *Lasqueti Newsletter* 2 (1978): 12 and 14. For a broader conversation on the relationship between the counterculture's environmental imagination and its approach to technology, see Andrew Kirk, "Appropriating Technology: The Whole Earth Catalog and Countercultural Environmental Politics," *Environmental History* 6, no. 3 (2001): 374–394.

<sup>335</sup> *Lasqueti Newsletter* 4 (1978): 11.

<sup>336</sup> *Lasqueti Newsletter* 4 (1978): 15.

stated that it would be physically impossible to keep their animals and pasture land from being “eliminated” by the presence of overhead power lines.<sup>337</sup>

Lasqueti’s Robin Fletcher, in a letter to the Minister of the Environment, provided a more detailed critique. For Fletcher, the anticipated chemical spraying along the line’s right-of-way was a serious threat to human health, a potential impact on Lasqueti that was highlighted because its biophysical nature was defined in pristine terms. This association not only hinged on the idea of an underdeveloped and rural appearance, but also on the perception of the island’s unadulterated chemical makeup. Therefore, the beauty and biodiversity of Lasqueti went hand in hand with the notion that “our vegetables are organic and our meat free of antibiotics, fattening agents, preservatives and chemical feed. We have no pesticides, herbicides or pollutants in our foods or water. Our shores are clean and our environment is healthy to the body and to the spirit.” Such an understanding came from Lasqueti’s particular historical development as a rural space that had developed on a purposeful course of countercultural underdevelopment.<sup>338</sup>

Fletcher’s letter to the government did not base its case just on the themes of Lasqueti’s presumed uniqueness. It also charged that BC Hydro was incorrect in its assessment of the project’s environmental impact. Citing research from the Food and Drug Directorate in Ottawa, the Environmental Protection Agency in the US, the World Federation of Scientists, and other experts, Fletcher maintained that exposure to herbicides such as 2-4-D and 2-4-5-T—both of which Hydro used—could have profound health consequences including mutation and cancer.<sup>339</sup> In this concern, Fletcher was not alone. One of the defining aspects of the campaign against Cheekeye-Dunsmuir was the process through which local community groups and individuals contested the authority of BC Hydro’s energy and environmental knowledge. Tina Loo and Meg Stanley have demonstrated how the agents of high-modern projects were dependent on forms of local

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<sup>337</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Brian Rhymer\* to ELUC, 14 January 1978, File 2, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA. The Rhymers lived on Jedidiah island, which is located between Texada and Lasqueti. It is likely that the Rhymer’s assumed that, because of the island’s location, it would be used to move the transmission line from Texada to Lasqueti.

<sup>338</sup> Robin Fletcher\* to the Ministry of the Environment, 20 February 1978. File 2, Box 9, ELUCS Fonds, GR 1786, BCA.

<sup>339</sup> Robin Fletcher\* to the Ministry of the Environment, 20 February 1978.



knowledge to physically enact large resource projects,<sup>340</sup> but the growing opposition to the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line places the relationship between politics, space, and infrastructure development into a new context. Specifically, it highlights how local activist groups resisted BC Hydro's efforts by re-situating their immediate and proximate relationship to the transmission line into a wider series of political, environmental, and economic contexts. Concerns over the threat of the transmission line pushed activists to engage in independent research and investigation that not only tried to undercut the utility's monopolization of technocratic authority, but also took them to places beyond the confines of their immediate locales.

Such a process is clearly reflected in the emergence of the Lasqueti Steering Committee. While the Lasqueti Community Association began the process of directing resistance to the transmission line, community members decided to create a new organization that could turn its entire focus to this task. In July of 1977, residents created a series of committees under the general umbrella of the Lasqueti Steering Committee in order to gather information and plan the different ways that the community could protect itself. Over the summer and fall, these committees began a process of studying a dizzying array of social, environmental, political, and economic issues relating to the production, consumption, and distribution of modern energy systems, including hydroelectricity, coal fired thermal plants, and nuclear power.<sup>341</sup>

Central to this work was the research of the health committee. Committee members sank their teeth into the 1973 BC Royal Commission of Inquiry into Pesticides and Herbicides and gathered information on the possible health effects of electromagnetic fields and herbicides by contacting academics at the University of Syracuse in New York State, the University of Arizona, and the University of British Columbia.<sup>342</sup> Rather than supplanting what they already knew through lived experience, this technical research fused with the existing local knowledge. Thus, while the health committee argued that academic studies had shown that herbicides like 2-4-D produced measurable birth defects in mice, one only needed to travel to nearby Galiano Island to see these effects operating on local people. The committee retold the story of a number

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<sup>340</sup> Tina Loo and Meg Stanley, "An Environmental History of Progress: Damming the Peace and Columbia Rivers," *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 3 (September 2011), 399–427.

<sup>341</sup> For an overview of the group's research projects, see *Lasqueti Newsletter* 2 (1977).

<sup>342</sup> Tom Carter, "Chemical Warfare," *Lasqueti Newsletter* 2 (1977): 3.

of Galiano residents who, after living next to power-line-right of way, had three children born with serious deformities of the spine and head, birth defects the committee connected to the spraying of herbicides:

Immediately beside this house and its garden and the water shed from which its water is collected, runs a B.C. Hydro 138 KV transmission line. These families ate from their garden, drank from this water, and collected and hunted and canned berries and venison from along the right-of-way until they learned of Hydro's defoliant program. Hydro denies spraying that year, even though local residents insist they saw crews spraying, even though empty herbicide canisters were found in the vicinity, even though the foliage along the right-of-way was brown and withered, even though their garden died.<sup>343</sup>

While academic studies helped to provide an empirical base for such assertions, it also enabled the committee to link local experiences with a global pattern of "chemical warfare" whose ultimate atrocities lay in the US military's use of defoliants against the jungles and people of Vietnam. Although the context of herbicidal use in Canada was different, the committee painted BC Hydro as part of larger cadre of experts who "wage a war against the growth of forest beneath high-voltage transmission lines, using poisonous chemical sprays as weapons."<sup>344</sup> They used similar process to argue against BC Hydro's minimization of the health effects related to electro-magnetic fields. The health committee drew on expert knowledge as a way to both contest the findings of BC Hydro and also connect their own struggles against Cheekeye-Dunsmuir to the struggles of other populations around the world that had reportedly suffered ill-health because of their exposure to high voltage transmission lines.<sup>345</sup>

However, the organizing campaigns of 1977 and 1978 entailed more than focusing on the insalubrious nature of high-voltage transmission lines. Since these infrastructural technologies were a ubiquitous part of modern life, it no doubt seemed unlikely that referencing affects on human health, many of which were highly debatable, would be enough to defeat Cheekeye-Dunsmuir. Moreover, if Hydro consented to drop the use of herbicides for alternative methods of managing the growth of vegetation along the right-of-way, arguments against the line would be left to rest on the more nebulous

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<sup>343</sup> Carter, "Chemical Warfare," 2.

<sup>344</sup> Carter, "Chemical Warfare," 2.

<sup>345</sup> "Pollution By Electrical Transmission Lines," *Lasqueti Newsletter* 1 (1977): 7–8; Tom Carter, letter to the editor, *Lasqueti Newsletter* 3 (1978): 14–15.

concept of electro-magnetic pollution. Therefore, to make a more robust case against the line, the committee combined ecological concerns with analyses that focused on the political economy of resource development. A diverse array of activists and public commentators engaged in a debate over the justifications that BC Hydro relied on to propose the project in the first place. The most aggressive of these critiques not only continued to question the competency of Hydro in reference to the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir project, but also created lines of attack that questioned the very logic of the utility's existence.

Just as activists had conducted their own research on herbicides and electro-magnetic fields, so too did they grapple with the techniques of power planning used by BC Hydro to justify the need for more energy use on Vancouver Island. As previously noted, the basis upon which Hydro made its proposal for the transmission line was the argument that the island would run out of power by the early 1980s. BC Hydro based this assertion on energy forecasts created by the utility's planning departments. Where Hydro had used the difficulty of energy forecasting as a means of justifying its own existence,<sup>346</sup> Hydro's opponents converted the meaning of these difficulties into themes that stressed the fragility and insecurity of the utility's technocratic knowledge.<sup>347</sup> Therefore, Steering Committee activists attempted to turn the tables on BC Hydro by arguing that planners had continually failed to develop realistic energy models. Of course, the utility saw the overshooting of estimates as beneficial. It was, to them, better to have too much energy than not enough. For the Steering Committee, however, the discrepancy between the projected and actual energy needs demonstrated that the utility's claims to expertise were not only questionable, it also enabled them to argue that since these estimates were the justification for the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line, BC Hydro's main form of evidence for its position was insecure. Moreover, while energy forecasting was risky as a general phenomenon, the Steering Committee maintained that the estimation of bulk energy needs consumed by large industrial firms were even more precarious since they hinged on levels of production which were likewise subject to the

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<sup>346</sup> The technical nature of energy forecasting was a common topic in Hydro's planning documents. For example, see BC Hydro Task Force on Future Generation and Transmission Requirements, *Alternatives: 1975 to 1990* (Vancouver: BC Hydro, 1975); and BC Hydro, *Forecasts of Gross Load Requirements, All Services: 1979–1990* (Vancouver: BC Hydro, 1979).

<sup>347</sup> Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, "Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee," 32.

unstable variations of the market. Given that such bulk consumption constituted nearly half of Vancouver Island's power usage, the risk of a series miscalculation warranted a moratorium on the line's construction until a more thorough review could be conducted.<sup>348</sup>

Allegations of inflated energy predictions not only called into question the need for the line, but they also raised a number of structural problems including conservation and political accountability. While BC Hydro spoke openly about the need for conservation, it did so by defining the issue in individual terms. The utility could help to educate people on the matter of energy efficiency and their daily consumption, but beyond that, it argued that the issue was out of its hands.<sup>349</sup> The Steering Committee countered that such an approach was out of touch with the realities of energy planning in the province. If neither the government nor BC Hydro took steps to systematize energy conservation, there would be little hope that the province would be able to implement meaningful forms of conservation, policies that reformers both inside and outside of government were promoting in response to the phenomenal escalation of energy costs during the early 1970s.<sup>350</sup> More damning, however, was the assertion that BC Hydro's economic and cultural commitment to building energy projects was counter to the spirit of environmental reform and structurally antithetical to the implementation of conservation policies. For the Steering Committee, continued commitments to new construction projects based on faulty power estimates created a situation where higher levels of energy consumption would be required to pay for those construction projects as well as to pay the ever-escalating interest on the utility's multi-billion dollar debt load. A mixture of inflated energy forecasts, costly construction projects, and mounting public debt created a situation where BC Hydro was incapable of fulfilling its commitment to conservation and environmentally responsible forms of development.<sup>351</sup> Instead, the Steering Committee argued that Hydro ought to provide affordable energy, as well as develop "renewable" forms of energy that would not lead to the "flooding of farmlands,

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<sup>348</sup> Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, "Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee," 32–36.

<sup>349</sup> BC Hydro Task Force, *Alternatives*, 12–14.

<sup>350</sup> Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, "Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee," 4–5.

<sup>351</sup> Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, "Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee," 6–7.

forest resources, and wildlife ranges, or by endangering the stability of our river systems and our highly important fisheries.” In this sense, they maintained that it was the utility’s “responsibility not to provide power where it is not needed, or where the power could be supplied from alternate, less socially and environmentally damaging sources.”<sup>352</sup>

The Steering Committee’s critique of Hydro should also be seen within a growing pattern of dissatisfaction with the public utility’s approach to energy planning and development throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Here, environmental organizations such as the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control, West Coast Environmental Law Association, B.C. Public Interest Advocacy Centre, as well as ad hoc groups nurtured the continuous questioning of Hydro policies.<sup>353</sup> Part of this process of opposition was a growing call for the establishment of public inquiries and hearings to critically probe the energy planning and development in the province. These patterns of dissent were certainly prevalent in the context of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir debate, where opposition groups continually attempted to initiate inquiries and hearings over the nature of the project.<sup>354</sup>

While groups such as the Lasqueti Steering Committee sought to work with Hydro to develop alternative modes of energy planning and design, anarchist currents maintained that the political, legal, and economic context of energy mega-projects meant that the deck was stacked against those who sought state-led reforms. Instead, they emphasized the need to organize popular forms of grass-roots resistance and political

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<sup>352</sup> Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, “Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee,” 2.

<sup>353</sup> See L. Graham Smith, “Taming B.C. Hydro: Site C and the Implementation of the B.C. Utilities Commission Act,” *Environmental Management* 12, no. 4 (1988): 429–443. In addition to controversy over its various construction projects, the utility also drew an extensive amount of public criticism based on its energy export policies with the United States. See Graham Farstad, “Guaranteed Supply of Electricity to U.S. a Costly Deal for Us,” *Vancouver Sun* (30 October 1979): 5; Basil Jackson “B.C. Hydro to Face Opposition” *Province* (11 December 1979): B5; Basil Jackson, “Opposition Growing against Hydro Export Plan,” *Province* (12 December 1979): A4; “SPEC Claims Energy Hearing Will Alter Hydro Export Policy,” *Vancouver Sun* (12 November 1979): D20; “Interveners Win Time to Study Hydro Plans,” *Vancouver Sun* (12 December 1979): A3; “In the Dark,” *Vancouver Sun* (30 November 1979): A3.

<sup>354</sup> For various perspectives on the need for public hearings, see Lasqueti Island Steering Committee, “Brief Submitted to the Crown Corporations Committee,” 37; A.G. Pressley (Sunshine Coast Regional District) to Carl Rising-Moore, 22 November 1979, File 1-26, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC; and Citizens for a Public Hearing on Cheekye-Dunsmuir, “The Cheekye-Dunsmuir Power Line: Boon or Bane for B.C. Residents?” File 1.20, Box 1, Ann Hansen Collection, Anarchist Archive, UVIC.

opposition to mega-projects. Such perspectives illustrated the intersection of anarchism and environmentalism that had taken place in urban centres such as Vancouver over the course of the 1970s. Not only had many of the activists involved in the city's anarchist resurgence developed their own local environmentalist projects, but they also used the pages of the anarchist press and the cultural initiatives of the Anarchist Party of Canada to draw connections between the global expansion of environmental activism and the politics of direct action and anti-hierarchical forms of organizing. It was in this context of struggle that anarchists joined with other environmental activists in order to organize against the energy mega-projects that the province was proposing at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.

One of the most revealing expressions of this anarchist engagement was a 1981 report written by Brent Taylor and another Vancouver anarchist on behalf of the Hat Creek Action Committee, a collective of Vancouver-based opponents to the Hat Creek coal project. While experienced environmental activists could site any number of ecological reasons to oppose energy mega-projects, the committee maintained that it was both the projected scope and the economic ideology behind this development that was particularly worrying. These claims were based upon a reading of the government's own energy objectives set out in a series of reports and policy papers issued by BC Hydro and the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources (Ministry of Energy).<sup>355</sup> In particular, the latter offered the two anarchists frank confirmation of the relationship between industrial energy projects, the state, and capitalist development.<sup>356</sup> For the Ministry of Energy, the province's substantial natural gas, coal, and hydroelectric resources were to be the "corner stone of industrial growth" for the 1980s and beyond. In this context, the Ministry of Energy defined the state as an institution that would secure and develop these resources for private corporations, encouraging trade and investment with energy insecure nations of the Pacific Rim and the extensive development of

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<sup>355</sup> Hat Creek Action Committee, *Stop B.C. Hydro Mega-Projects* (self-published report: [Vancouver?], 16 October 1981), 1–2. For Hansen's reflections of the activity of the Hat Creek group, see, *Direct Action*, 88–89, 96–108, and 118–125.

<sup>356</sup> Hansen and Taylor quote extensively from the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources policy paper, *An Energy Secure British Columbia*. See Hat Creek Action Committee, *Stop B.C. Hydro Mega-Projects*, 7.

hydroelectric power to ensure that corporations at home could always count on a “secure and reliable supply of electricity.”<sup>357</sup>

For the Hat Creek Action Committee, materials like these demonstrated three fundamental issues. First, the pace and scope of industrial development were set to expand dramatically over the course of the 1980s. Second, the state was developing mega-projects in order to support and enrich capitalism at home and abroad. And finally, in the wake of the global energy crisis, the language of “energy security” reflected not only local development policies, but also an entrenched ideology among western capitalist nations that sought to develop domestic energy supplies in order to better control and stabilize capitalist markets, as well as the individual domestic social and political conditions within those countries. By outlining the centrality of energy development to the provincial economy and connecting it to a wider base of support within the context of transnational capitalist development, the Hat Creek Committee argued that it was politically and economically improbable to assume that local public inquiries and hearings would be allowed to significantly challenge capitalist-state alliances.<sup>358</sup>

Nevertheless, the committee did join with other environmental activists in the call for public inquiries and hearings. The committee’s position differed from other environmental groups, though, in that it did not base its support for public inquiries and hearings on a belief that they would lead to meaningful policy changes. Instead, they grounded their assessment of public hearings in a belief that they could operate as an important political forum. Therefore, the committee encouraged public hearings not because they were effective tools for reform, but because they had the potential to amplify and organize public opposition around specific issues. By creating formal spaces within which to discuss particular policies and developments, public hearings were

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<sup>357</sup> For the original passage, see Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources, *An Energy Secure British Columbia: The Challenge and the Opportunity* (Victoria: February, 1980), 9–10.

<sup>358</sup> For Taylor and the Hat Creek Action Committee, this argument was further supported by connecting the information they found on provincial energy policy to similar trends within the policy papers of the Trilateral Commission. Not only did they see significant parallels between the two positions, but it was also well understood by many activists in the province that BC Hydro Chairman Robert Bonner’s position on the executive of the Trilateral Commission was emblematic of how local developments fit within the broader nexus of transnational capitalist planning and policy. See for example, Hat Creek Action Committee, *Stop B.C. Hydro Mega-Projects*, 11.

venues that could amplify the concerns of activists, both within the hearing itself, but also through mainstream and activist media outlets. Moreover, in anticipation of these public moments, hearings could help spur the creation of new political alliances as different groups merged their voices and resources together in order to pressure government agencies to open up the debate to public input. Furthermore, activists could use the call for public hearings as a form of organization and agitation could be accomplished regardless of whether the government sanctioned the inquiry or not. Indeed, instances where the state refused to grant such a request resulted in the final and most significant benefit for militant groups such as the Hat Creek Committee. In denying the public meaningful participation, the government gave activists the ability to claim that they had no other choice but to engage in more militant actions as a form of last resort. As Taylor and his colleagues in the committee concluded, “if we fail to stop Hydro through the existing legal process, we must then use this government refusal to adhere to the wishes of the people, to publicly justify the need to go beyond legal channels and engage in direct action in order that the real public interest, and ecological sanity, prevails.”<sup>359</sup>

The shift to the tactics of mass direct action required creating local, regional, and cross-regional alliances between different communities and activist networks, and it also required a radical transformation in thinking. For Hansen and Taylor, this meant that activists needed to demystify and then reject “whatever legal authority the Cabinet or Hydro claims to possess.” In this sense, the central constraint standing between the public and effective forms of mass action was the “sanctity” given to the concept of legality. While the state held an effective grip on making laws, it was up to the public to decide whether or not they would follow these dictates. Since the committee understood that political and economic logic of the state clearly favoured extensive industrialization, they maintained that militant resistance was the only viable option left. “Unless we refuse to accept the sanctity of the legal decisions, and refuse to abide by them,” they argued, “we will see them build every mega-project that they really want.”<sup>360</sup>

As a result, the work of the Hat Creek Action Committee not only provided an example of how anarchists such as Taylor and Hansen explained environmental degradation through the organization and application of global capitalism, but also

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<sup>359</sup> Hat Creek Action Committee, *Stop B.C. Hydro Mega-Projects*, 5–6.

<sup>360</sup> Hat Creek Action Committee, *Stop B.C. Hydro Mega-Projects*, 6.



highlighted how those ecological and economic conditions shaped the contours of resistance. While other environmental activists were certainly mindful of the economic forces that shaped Hydro's energy policy, the anarchist perspectives on the nature of the state and its relation to the transnational energy industry placed a greater priority and significance upon popular forms of opposition and direct action.

However, the actual implementation of militant forms of direct action raised a host of complicated political and cultural challenges. Many activists opposed illegal activity, but even among those that supported it, there could be little agreement on what constituted effective and meaningful illegal activism. This was particularly evident in the struggles against the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir transmission line on Texada Island over the summer of 1980. When Hydro began the initial phase of construction on the island, it provided activists with the opportunity to apply minor acts of sabotage and forms of civil disobedience to contest the line's construction. While the actions were minor compared to the Direct Action bombing, they are important to note because they reflected the on-going interaction between anarchists and the broader environmental movement. As in other places, this interaction resulted in a number of personal experiences that highlighted a shared political and moral commitment to the use of illegal action to oppose environmental degradation. At the same time, the interaction was also deeply confrontational, creating a series of conflicts that highlighted divergent ideas over the purpose, definition, and meaning of militant protest and illegal action.

The organizing force behind the Texada protests was the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance (CDA), a small network of environmentalists based primarily out of Texada Island and Powell River. The CDA's main driving force was Carl Rising-Moore, an American military veteran who had resettled in British Columbia during the mid-1970s. Starting in 1975, Rising-Moore began working on a range of environmental issues and became a common feature within some of the city's most well known activist groups, including Greenpeace, the Society for Pollution and Environmental Control, and the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility. Like many other activists, he also traveled south in support of this political work, studying civil disobedience at the Centre for Non-Violent Action in Santa Cruz. From this base of activity, Rising-Moore threw himself into the fight against Cheekeye-Dunsmuir. Leaving Vancouver, he stayed on both Texada and in Powell River in order to build a local opposition movement. In this, he and his colleagues were moderately successful. They gathered together a small handful of

concerned teachers, educators, and back-to-the-land farmers from Texada, a couple of carpenters, a well known peace activist named Martin Rossander from Powel River, and a smattering of people from Vancouver and the east coast of Vancouver Island. Between 1977 and 1980, this core group of around a dozen activists wrote letters, gave workshops, and organized local meetings to try and force the creation of meaningful public hearings on the line based on the economic, ecological, and political arguments, articulations shared by other oppositional forces including Society for Pollution and Environmental Control, Mid-Island Coalition on Energy, the Canadian Committee for Nuclear Responsibility, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, and the Lasqueti Island Steering Committee.<sup>361</sup> When those initiatives began to lose ground in the wake of the line's construction, they called on the public to descend on Texada to physically block the passage of the line.

Many of the CDA's supporters who helped promote the call to direct action and civil disobedience were anarchists. Most of these allies were from Vancouver, including Ann Hansen, Brent Taylor, Doug Stewart, Jill Bend and others, all of whom knew Rising-Moore from his work with different environmental protests, anti-nuclear activities, and Aboriginal solidarity actions, campaigns that many of them had participated in since the mid 1970s.<sup>362</sup> While none of these Vancouver anarchists were members of the CDA, they were well acquainted with its activism surrounding Cheekeye-Dunsmuir and attended many of the meetings, events, and demonstrations that Rising-Moore and others organized in Vancouver. In addition to promoting the convergence on Texada, a small group of anarchists, including Jill Bend, joined the CDA to contest BC Hydro on the island.

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<sup>361</sup> Carl Rising-Moore, interview with author, 28 September 2012; Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance, "Paying for too much," File 1-22, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC; Letter to Carl Rising-Moore from Sunshine Coast Regional District, 22 November 1979, File 1-26, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC; Carl Rising-Moore, untitled broadsheet, [n.d.], Box 1, File 1-26, Box 1, Lille d'Easum Fonds, RBSC, UBC. Information on Rising-Moore's political activity was also recorded in preparation for the trial of Direct Action where he was called as a witness by the defence to provide evidence in relation to the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir protests. See "Carl Rising-Moore," File 1.20, Box 1, Ann Hansen Collection, Anarchist Archive, UVIC. Information on the CDA and its activity against the transmission line can also be found in a series of newsletters produced by the network. See *Cheekeye Dunsmuir Alliance Newsletter* (December 1980); *C-D Alliance Newsletter* (26 December 1980); "Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance update," (October 1981), File 1.20, Box 1, Ann Hansen Collection, Anarchist Archive, UVIC.

<sup>362</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 13 March 2012; Jill Bend, interview with author, 3 October 2012; Carl Rising-Moore, interview with author, 28 September 2012.

For Rising-Moore and the CDA, forms of non-violent civil disobedience would act as models for the protest. No longer feeling it possible to change the policies behind the project, activists would congregate as a mass and place their bodies in front of bulldozers to prohibit the implementation of BC Hydro's policies. At a meeting the night before they were to set up their blockade, CDA members gathered with their off-Island allies to reiterate the goals and procedures that would govern the action. Rising-Moore remembers it in the following way: "There was consensus. There would be no property destruction. There would be no violence toward the operators of the bulldozers or the BC Hydro executives that would be out there, or any other person, [and it was agreed] that we would behave in a disciplined, non-violent manner."<sup>363</sup> A central motivation behind the call for "disciplined" action was a concern for how the media would frame the protest. The CDA based this idea on the presumption that personal decorum had clear ramifications on how the public would see and thus relate to the movement. In this sense, the CDA sought to develop the contours of illegal action in congress with a series of assumptions regarding the nature and significance of public opinion.

At the same time, the CDA's support for non-violent civil disobedience also exposed how activist tactics merged with the formation and maintenance of radical identity. Unlike clandestine guerrilla actions, non-violent civil disobedience did not attempt to escape the repercussions of its illegality. It did not, in the words of Rising-Moore, "hide" or attempt to circumvent the punitive and repressive powers of the police or judicial system. In this sense, it displayed a definition of militancy that hinged upon a commitment to personal transparency. Nevertheless, acting illegally with the full intention of being apprehended and punished was risky since it brought with it a wide range of personal ramifications, particularly the potential for physical abuse at the hands of the state. Like many other leftists, Rising-Moore understood the state to be inherently violent and that provocations triggered this violence, rather than creating it. Repeating a conversation he had many times throughout the years, he scolded activists who became flustered when the state answered non-violent actions with physical attacks.

A lot of times there would be someone that would come up to me and say "Carl, these cops just beat me, and nothing is going to happen about that." I said, "Well, did they break any bones? You seem to be talking alright. What did you expect? We're going up against the system here.

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<sup>363</sup> Carl Rising-Moore, interview with author, 28 September 2012.

You know, I don't want to diminish the fact that you've been beaten, but in reality we have to expect that." And so I think that a lot of people misunderstand non-violence as wishy-washy.<sup>364</sup>

In this sense, Rising-Moore attempted to dispel the idea that non-violent civil disobedience was a flaky form of political posturing. Instead, he articulated a sense of radical commitment that was rooted in the ability to accept and withstand violence against one's self. Citing Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., Rising-Moore described such action as the "weapon of the brave," a form of resistance featuring militancy rooted in expressions of vulnerability and fortitude.

While the Texada protest did not elicit police beatings or other forms of overt state violence, it also did not go according to the plans of the organizers. The illegal activity of the CDA did not align with the conflicting ideas of illegality of Vancouver anarchists. At some point during the blockade, Rising-Moore recalled that members of the anarchist contingent broke from the line and attacked a number of BC Hydro vehicles, slashing their tires. CDA members were irate at this sudden shift in the organization of resistance, maintaining that it constituted a betrayal of a previously agreed upon set of principles. To emphasize this point, Rising-Moore maintained that he had a verbal confrontation with an activist named Bob Mutant, one of the more enthusiastic saboteurs that had attacked BC Hydro's vehicles. Still clearly annoyed some thirty years after the fact, Rising-Moore claimed that Mutant, once confronted, told him that the event did not count as an authentic form of protest if nothing was destroyed. Furthermore, Mutant apparently argued that he and his fellow anarchists had the authority to do what they liked, when they liked, despite previously agreeing to a united front.

Unable to be reached for comment on these events, Mutant's take on the issue of consensus, group dynamics and authority, and the way the protest actually played out, is unknown. Jill Bend, who was present that day, remembered that Rising-Moore was upset and that she witnessed him having a heated confrontation with someone. However, it remains unclear to her who that individual was. At the same time, she was direct in stating that Vancouver anarchists were keen to contribute to the protest in ways

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<sup>364</sup> Carl Rising-Moore, interview with author, 28 September 2012.

that went beyond the initiation of a blockade, and she had no recollection of the non-violent agreement that Rising-Moore cited in his telling of the protest.<sup>365</sup>

While the details of how the conflict between the CDA and the anarchist contingent unfolded that day on Texada remain unclear, there is no doubt that these were significant differences of opinion over the effective organization and meaning of environmental resistance. In contrast to Rising-Moore's emphasis on the militancy of non-violent civil disobedience, Bend defined the bulldozer blockade as a "diffused" event, one that involved a lot of "standing around and talking and not so much acting." In this reading, even the actual moment of confrontation between people and bulldozers was decidedly anti-climactic:

The actual blockade...is only momentary. Or, even if you are still blockading, the moment of the confrontation is finished fairly quickly. Like, if you are blockading a bulldozer, like the occasion on Texada, a number of people link arms in front of the bulldozer and the driver can't go ahead and the driver, you know, maybe bellyaches and tries to move [the bulldozer] and keeps the engine on for five or ten minutes. But, eventually, the foreman orders the engines turned off, and the driver is to step aside, and negotiating starts. So, it tends to be long and drawn out.<sup>366</sup>

Anarchists stood with the CDA to block the passage of bulldozers, but they had alternative ideas about what constituted militant resistance, perspectives that placed them outside the tactical and cultural framework of non-violent civil disobedience as defined by the CDA. For Bend and her comrades, confrontations with Hydro provided opportunities to conduct acts of sabotage, generally referred to at the time as "monkey wrenching."<sup>367</sup> Although she does not remember the tire-slashing event cited by Rising-Moore, she does recall participating in a series of covert actions the night before. Under the cover of darkness, Bend and other Vancouver anarchists moved through the area where the protest was to take place the following day, ripping up the survey stakes and

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<sup>365</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 3 October 2012.

<sup>366</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 3 October 2012.

<sup>367</sup> The term "monkey wrenching," which was generally used as a synonym for low-level forms of sabotage, had its origin in Edward Abbey's novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975).

the tape that marked the boundaries and contours of the construction project and pouring sugar into the gas tanks of the bulldozers in an attempt to break their engines.<sup>368</sup>

Such actions reflected a different approach to the concept of militant illegality than those practiced by the CDA. Where Rising-Moore castigated the idea of hidden and covert forms of illegality, Bend and her colleagues fully embraced the idea of clandestine action. In part, this reflected the growing interest and prominence of armed struggle and urban guerrilla action within Vancouver's anarchist scene. Direct Action's decision to bomb the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line reflected this general political turn. At the same time, political and cultural analyses of armed struggle as a conceptual phenomenon only go so far in explaining why the collective attacked the transmission line. In order to understand why Direct Action targeted Cheekeye-Dunsmuir, this chapter concludes by addressing the collective's specific political concerns. In doing so, it emphasizes how the issues surrounding the transmission line evoked a broad range of political, social, economic, and ecological concerns that were distinct from those articulated by other opposition groups. In doing so, the chapter argues that attention to the specific anarchist traditions that buttressed the collective's work are critical in understanding the meaning and significance of its actions.

At the most mundane level, the collective felt the transmission line met all the basic requirements for a successful guerrilla action. Distrust and anger towards BC Hydro was widespread, and controversy and broad social opposition marked the specific history of the transmission line's development. Since Cheekeye-Dunsmuir was still off-line, Direct Action's attack would not cause a widespread electrical blackout. Therefore, the collective felt that the action would not meaningfully disrupt the lives of the public. The action was also attractive because it seemed relatively straightforward. The previous year's activity of building an underground infrastructure meant that the collective had both the knowledge and the material to orchestrate a targeted bombing. As a result, Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart spent the early spring of 1982 researching the various components of the line and staking out a number of different construction sites

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<sup>368</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 3 October 2012.

near Squamish, on the Seachelt Peninsula and Texada Island, and on the outskirts of Qualicum Beach. In the end, the latter proved to be the most advantageous.<sup>369</sup>

On the evening of 31 May 1982, Hansen sat on a small grassy hill and watched Stewart as he moved quickly among four large shunt reactors. Ten meters high and weighing a hundred tonnes each, the machines were the industrial heart of the Dunsmuir hydroelectric substation. From their surveillance of the construction site, the collective felt certain that they were alone. The nearest house was kilometres away and the construction project did not have a guard or anyone else staying on the job site. In a sense, this was surprising given the controversies surrounding the construction of line. A chain-link fence surrounded the reactors, worth in the range of a million dollars each, but bolt cutters quickly eliminated that obstacle. With Hansen keeping lookout, Stewart worked meticulously to set neat piles of dynamite at the base of each of the four reactors. He wired them together and set the timer to detonate at 1:30 am. Stewart's electrical rigging worked perfectly, and in the early morning hours of 1 June, the Dunsmuir substation was blown to pieces. The blast shattered the steel casings of the reactors and ignited the diesel fuel inside, turning them into smouldering torches that burned well after the arrival of the police hours later. Shrapnel and debris flew hundreds of meters outwards from the blast site, damaging not only the reactors but also much of the surrounding construction equipment. People living in the surrounding area felt their houses tremble as the shockwave from the blast rolled across Qualicum Beach.

Unsurprisingly, the bombing was front page news in the provincial papers, with reactions ranging from references to terrorism and environmental zealotry<sup>370</sup> to more measured responses that defined the action as "sabotage" and attempted to explain it through references to the preceding conflicts over the line's implementation.<sup>371</sup> On 2 June, the day following the detonation, Direct Action sent a communiqué to a range of media outlets, environmental networks, and activist organizations claiming responsibility for the attack. While the communiqué framed the attack, in part, as a response to the

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<sup>369</sup> Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Jill Bend, interview with author, 3 October 2012; Hansen, *Direct Action*, 196–202.

<sup>370</sup> "Demented Minds," *Province* (3 June 1982): B1; "When Zealots Become Terrorists," *Times Colonist* (4 June 1982): Opinion 1.

<sup>371</sup> "4.5 Million Blast Sabotage," *Times Colonist* (1 June 1982): 1; "Mounties Begin Probe of Sabotage at Hydro Station," *Vancouver Sun* (1 June 1982): A3; "Hydro Boosts Security After Blasts," *Province* (1 June 1982): 1.

failure of legal opposition and non-violent civil disobedience, it also maintained that the collective targeted Cheekeye-Dunsmuir because they saw it as both contributing to and reflecting the ecological, economic, and social oppressions inherent in industrial modernity.

In order to investigate how the Direct Action collective understood these issues and what they can tell us about anarchism's relationship with environmentalism, the remainder of this chapter turns to a close reading of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir communiqué, a number of documents and oral testimony produced by members of the Direct Action collective in the wake of their arrest in 1983, and contemporary oral interviews conducted by the author. However, because the events surrounding the arrest of Direct Action have yet to be covered in the preceding pages, using source materials produced during the collective's trial and imprisonment breaks the chronological timeline that has so far structured this historical narrative. Nevertheless, such a strategy is essential because it was in the context of imprisonment that Hansen, Taylor, and Stewart, along with their colleagues Belmas and Hannah, had the time and resources to construct and disseminate more extensive commentary on the political, social, and cultural contexts behind their activity.

Underground documents such as the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir communiqué provided a critical first source for this information. In addition to claiming the bombing, the collective posited that there was no clear dividing line between the ecological and economic contexts of the transmission line, or between the project and other patterns of industrial development, either at home or abroad. Paralleling its further industrialization of Vancouver Island, Direct Action understood the line to be part of a pattern of provincial development in which "half the forest has been logged and many rivers dammed. The valleys are littered with highways and power lines, the estuaries are paved and polluted, the water is poisoned, mills and smelters belch noxious fumes, and nuclear power and acid rain are soon to come."<sup>372</sup> In exploring the energy and transportation infrastructure projects of the state, both at the time and in the future, the collective positioned the transmission line along side a wider array of capitalist initiatives

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<sup>372</sup> Direct Action, "Communiqué Regarding the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Bombing," reproduced in Hansen, *Direct Action*, 475.



in the resource sector, development initiatives that the collective saw as contributing to a range of undesirable and insalubrious environments.<sup>373</sup>

At the same time, Direct Action also understood the local relationships between the ecological and the economic as reflecting broader economic themes. Here, the collective re-situated Cheekeye-Dunsmuir from its regional and provincial contexts into a geographical setting that was both national and transnational. Moreover, it based such articulations on a temporal reading that stretched into the past and future. In this way, the collective argued that, “Canada’s historical role has always been that of supplier of cheap resources to the industrialized world. As this role becomes more critical internationally, the development of energy and resource mega-projects in Canada has become a government priority. As well as serving a strategic function within the international capitalist economy, the Canadian capitalists see these mega-projects as a means of overcoming the ongoing economic crisis nationally.”<sup>374</sup> This reading clearly reflected previous arguments made by the Hat Creek Action Committee based on their assessment of the state’s industrial vision for the 1980s. It also reflected a broader tendency among Hydro’s environmental opponents, which criticized the utility’s modernizing authority by alleging that its development initiatives reflected political, economic, and cultural dynamics that were at odds with those of the public. Nevertheless, there were also critical political differences separating the collective from most of the surrounding environmental movement, differences rooted in a particular anarchist framework.

The first of these anarchist differences was that, while the relationship between capitalism and the state remained a critical explanatory factor for the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir project, Direct Action maintained that it opposed “industrial society” in general. Here, the bombing symbolized their opposition to forms of industrialism reflected in both “the capitalist machine in the West and the communist machine in the East.”<sup>375</sup> In this sense, Direct Action mapped its global reading of environmental degradation not only against a network of capitalist nation-states, but it also reflected a transnational imagination capable of encompassing the totality of established Cold War political

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<sup>373</sup> Direct Action, “Communiqué Regarding the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Bombing,” 475.

<sup>374</sup> Direct Action, “Communiqué Regarding the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Bombing,” 475.

<sup>375</sup> Direct Action, “Communiqué Regarding the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Bombing,” 475.

polarities. While it was certainly true that non-anarchist environmental groups could position themselves against both Cold War camps, anarchists did so for different reasons since they opposed both the industrial policies and ecological effects of nation-states, and the political, economic, social, and cultural foundations and objectives of those political constructs. In this sense, addressing the distinct patterns of anarchist politics within the communiqué remains a critical factor in explaining the particular meanings and historical contexts behind the collective's action against Cheekeye-Dunsmuir.

The second major anarchist difference embedded within the communiqué was an expression of radical pluralism and intersectionality that linked together a wide range of oppressive human relationships. The starting point for this assessment was the presumption that, if patterns of environmental transformation both supplied and contributed to the economic drive for capital accumulation, then that relationship operated within a more extensive political nexus. Direct Action based this argument on a wide reaching and well established anarchist perspective that understood capitalist exploitation as only one manifestation of an unequal organization of power and authority. Therefore, within the context of the communiqué, the desire to accumulate power, the drive to place oneself above others, and a chronic lack of empathy were, for the collective, the "sinister bonds" that linked "ecological destruction" to parallel forms of human oppression such as "sexism, racism, hierarchy, and imperialism."<sup>376</sup> While the collective no doubt understood that particularities of time and space shaped each of these categories, their analysis hinted at the ways in which asymmetrical relationships of power, influence, privilege, and authority connected these systems together.

Moreover, this intersectionality remained a central feature of the collective's political articulations in the wake of their arrest. Continuing to function as a form of analysis that explained and criticized various social phenomena, they also used intersectionality to explain and define the contours of the collective's anarchist political perspectives to the public. This was particularly evident in a series of interviews conducted between BCTV reporter Margo Harper and members of Direct Action that took place in 1983 during their incarceration. Through addressing a wide range of questions posed to her by the television reporter, Hansen engaged with the definitional

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<sup>376</sup> Direct Action, "Communiqué Regarding the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Bombing," 475.

boundaries of anarchist politics in two distinct ways, both of which hinged on the notion of intersectionality. First, Hansen used the intersection of oppressive phenomena to highlight an anarchist concern with the overarching effects of unequal articulations of power, an argument that emerged when she was asked to comment on the diversity of her political experiences:

Harper: You've worked extensively in different political movements, Ann. Is there one struggle that you feel aligned to more than any other?

Hansen: No, I would have to say that I don't. Although, I guess I do have a particularly strong connection to the environmental movement, both because of my own work, but also because the Earth is the basis for all forms of life. But I do see all struggles as connected. So, to say that one is more important than the next leads to you believing that there are separate problems. But I think that the action and ideas of corporations and governments are the source of both the oppression of the Earth and the oppression of women.<sup>377</sup>

In this, Hansen reiterated and expanded upon similar arguments made in the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir communiqué.

Second, she was at pains to explain that this eclectic political framework had complicated outcomes for her own political identity. While she maintained that it would be perfectly correct to describe her as an "anarchist," one also had to read the label through its connections to other forms of political identification. Therefore, in addition to "being anarchists, we are also ecologists, and feminists, and activists, and anti-imperialists, and we see ourselves through all these ways and we don't have a certain or set label for ourselves to describe ourselves."<sup>378</sup>

There was also a certain amount of practicality involved in noting the fluid nature of anarchist identity. Set in the specific context of Direct Action's arrest and trial, the use of intersectionality enabled the collective to counter popular misconceptions over the nature of anarchist politics. As Taylor explained to Harper, he was completely comfortable describing himself as an anarchist. Nevertheless, he noted that the collective's embracing of other political identities and perspectives could be important in

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<sup>377</sup> Ann Hansen and Juliet Belmas, interview with Margo Harper, 1983, audiocassette recording, Jill Bend Personal Collection.

<sup>378</sup> Ann Hansen and Juliet Belmas, interview with Margo Harper, 1983, audiocassette recording, Jill Bend Personal Collection.

the context of their arrest, maintaining that “it was a fine point that we were making in that we don’t want to just be seen as anarchists because of the misconceptions that exist out there as to what anarchism was.”<sup>379</sup> While Taylor’s comments highlight how the contours of political identity could bend depending on the presumed leanings of the public, the collective’s emphasis on the intersectionality of anarchism was also rooted in a series of broader historical changes. In this sense, one had to understand anarchist intersectionality as a form of analysis, organization, and identity, as a fluid tradition that changed over time. In this sense, while both Taylor and Stewart explained their anarchism to Harper by referencing established patterns of anarchist theory and practice that stretched back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was also critical to understand that anarchist politics had not stood still over that period.<sup>380</sup> Indeed, one of the critical contexts driving the intersectional politics of Direct Action was the degree to which anarchist ideas had been reformulated in the post-war years.

One of the most vibrant transformations in this process was the increasing interest among anarchists in the structure and meaning of industrial modernity. Since the sixties, a growing body of anarchist and anti-authoritarian writing shifted towards addressing these themes, works that were analytically linked to a previous set of critical studies on the nature of technology and social domination developed by writers such as Lewis Mumford, as well as neo-Marxists such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.<sup>381</sup> However, for those anarchists who came of age, politically and culturally, in the wake of the long sixties, it was often the writing of activists such as Murray Bookchin, as well as the publishing efforts of *The Fifth Estate*, that provided some of the most critical conversations on the relationship between nature, ecology, and industrial modernity. As Damian White has noted, early essays by Bookchin, including “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought” (1964), “Towards a Liberatory Technology” (1965), and “Listen, Marxist!” (1969), provided a range of new insights into the way in which

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<sup>379</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with Margo Harper, 1983, audiocassette recording, Jill Bend Personal Collection.

<sup>380</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with Margo Harper, 1983; and Doug Stewart, interview with Margo Harper, 1983, audiocassette recordings, Jill Bend Personal Collection. For Hannah’s thoughts on the changing nature of anarchist ideas, particularly in reference to environmental politics, see John Abbott, “Interview: Gerry Hannah,” *Prison Journal* 4 (December 1984): 76–95.

<sup>381</sup> For example, see Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934); *The Pentagon of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1970); and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

ecological, technological, and social problems connected across space and time. In response, Bookchin advocated for new forms of technology that might support decentralized, democratic, and ecologically sustainable communities.<sup>382</sup>

Other anarchists, however, were more sceptical of technology, seeing it as indicative of a much more ominous industrial problem. This was particularly evident within the pages of *Fifth Estate*, an anarchist journal which, in 1981, published a series of critical essays on the nature, meaning, and significance of technology and industrial modernity. In the introduction to that issue, the journal's collective maintained that the totality of contemporary life was defined by patterns of technological imprisonment, forms of confinement that were labyrinth-like in their organization. Like all good labyrinths, these structures promised only confusion and doom. They offered nothing other than the poisoning of the human body and spirit.<sup>383</sup> The central piece in the journal's extrapolation of this essay entitled "Against the Megamachine," used the work of social theorists such as Mumford and Jacques Ellul, as well as aspects of Bookchin, in order to define technology in ways that were entirely corrosive, both ecologically and socially. Where Bookchin differentiated between different types and forms of technology, the author of "Against the Megamachine" saw no such differentiation. Technological power was a totalizing and homogenous force, one that "colonized" society in general. Technology "changes all local and individual conditions to its own image. It creates a single, vast, homogenous technological civilization," a process that results in a "disposed, atomized and deskilled human subject which is identical from Lapland to Taiwan."<sup>384</sup> In this articulation there was no middle ground. Describing an acute sense of polarity, "Against the Megamachine" argued for the abandonment of technology in general, something understood as being the only prerequisite for human emancipation.<sup>385</sup>

The writings of Bookchin and the *Fifth Estate*, although they were divergent on the political meaning and significance of technology, nevertheless reflected a broader process through which concerns over environmental change shaped the development of

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<sup>382</sup> Damien White, *Bookchin: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 18–27.

<sup>383</sup> "Introduction" *Fifth Estate* 15, no. 5 (July 1981): 3.

<sup>384</sup> "Against the Mega-machine," *Fifth Estate*, 15, no. 5 (July 1981): 4.

<sup>385</sup> "Against the Mega-machine," 8.

anarchist thought and activism in the wake of the long sixties. This was certainly true in the context of Vancouver, where the anarchist resurgence became entwined with the corresponding expansion of environmental activism. In between the demise of Yippie and the foundation of *Open Road*, a group of activists that included Larry Gambone, Barb Elliot, David Spaner, Peter Prongros, Gina Parker, Scott Parker, Eric Sommer, Bob Sarti, David Spaner, and Ken Lester voraciously engaged with Bookchin's analysis of anarchism, social organization, and technology. In 1972, several members of this group organized themselves as the Volunteers, a short-lived activist group that sought to bring together the traditions of environmental and anarchist activism.<sup>386</sup> A decade later, in the early years of the 1980s, Direct Action took these anarchist engagements with environmentalism in new directions. Here, the collective's attack on BC Hydro spoke both to the immediate controversies of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir project, as well as articulated a broader rejection of industrial modernism. In the wake of their arrest, Taylor, Stewart, Belmas, and Hannah elaborated further on the contours of their technological and industrial critique. Articulating similar concerns to the *Fifth Estate*, they maintained that industrial society pointed towards human and non-human forms of extinction in the future, and the destruction of meaningful social relationships in the present.<sup>387</sup> As Hannah bluntly noted "[w]e must stop kidding ourselves that industrialism and the environment can co-exist. They can't. We must stop presuming that we need all of our modern devices and processes to survive and be happy. We don't. And we must stop assuming that the people with the power, be they elected or otherwise, will make the right decisions for us. They won't."<sup>388</sup> Radical assessments such as these, paired with the collective's emphasis on sabotage and armed struggle, demonstrate the ways in

<sup>386</sup> Gambone, *No Regrets*, 120–121. While the group had a much less prolific lifespan than did Yippie, glimpses into the cultural, political, and environmental imagination of the Volunteers were captured in its short-lived publication, *Earth and Fire*. Here, the collective reproduced selections of Bookchin's work, discussed the legacy of nineteenth and twentieth century anarchists, such as Michael Bakunin and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, as well as the contemporary relevance of the IWW, John Lennon, and Yoko Ono. See Murray Bookchin, "Towards an Ecological Solution," *Earth and Fire* 2 (Summer 1972): 1; "The Volunteers: Where We Stand," *Earth and Fire* 2 (Summer 1972): 2; "Know Your Anarchists!" *Earth and Fire* 2 (Summer 1972): 2–3; Yoko Ono and John Lennon, "Woman is the Nigger of the World," *Earth and Fire* 2 (Summer 1972): 3; "Wobblies Come Back!" *Earth and Fire* 2 (Summer 1972): 9.

<sup>387</sup> See Brent Taylor, "Patriarchal Conquest and Industrial Civilization," in *Writings of the Vancouver Five* (Vancouver: self published pamphlet, [1984?]): 33–39; Julie Belmas, "Technology is Doom," illustration, in *Writings of the Vancouver Five*, 20–21; Doug Stewart, "Living in Reality," in *Writings of the Vancouver Five*, 5–9; Gerry Hannah, "The Work Ethic and the Western Dream," in *Writings of the Vancouver Five*, 23–32.

<sup>388</sup> Hannah, "The Work Ethic and the Western Dream," 32.

which Direct Action placed their own mark upon a broader anarchist critique of industrial modernism and environmental transformation.

The struggle against the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line also demonstrated that this anarchist engagement was inseparable from a broader pattern of environmental activism in the province during the 1970s and 1980s. Anarchist and non-anarchist environmentalists shared similar concerns over the environmental degradation and social disruption associated with energy megaprojects, and they contributed to a rising chorus of dissent over the political and economic priorities of energy planning in the province. Moreover, activists central to Vancouver's anarchist resurgence worked alongside other environmental organizations, such as the CDA. In doing so, both groups proposed a wide array of tactical measures from which to resist provincial energy policies. Anarchists in the Hat Creek Action Committee supported the call for public hearings alongside their non-anarchist colleagues, while activists with the CDA joined with anarchists to engage in illegal forms of activism against BC Hydro. Yet the specific forms that this illegal action took, particularly sabotage, separated the two groups. This mixture of affinity and fracture demonstrates wider patterns through which anarchist activism, politics, and culture developed through its converging and conflicting relationships with non-anarchist environmental movements. Indeed, Direct Action's bombing of the Litton Systems and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade's assault on Red Hot Video further reveal the ways in which anarchist activism was intimately entwined with some of the most poignant expressions of social movement activism of the late 1970s and early 1980s, albeit in often unexpected ways.

## Chapter 5

### **“Refuse the Cruise”: Anarchism and the Unexpected Politics of Anti-nuclear Activism in Canada**

Five months after their attack against BC Hydro, Direct Action conducted their second bombing, this time against Litton Systems Canada, a company on the outskirts of Toronto that was building navigation systems for American cruise missiles. With over 500 pounds of dynamite wired into the back of van that they had stolen days earlier, they parked the vehicle outside the company's security post where they assumed it would be noticed by the authorities after they called in a bomb threat. The group anticipated that security staff would then promptly evacuate the factory's employees before the automatic timer detonated the explosion. This did not happen.<sup>389</sup>

Instead, communication between the collective and the security services at Litton was ineffective. When Direct Action called in the bomb threat, their message was either unclear to the receiver, misunderstood, or possibly disregarded as a hoax. Regardless, Litton security did not take immediate action as the timing device on the explosives continued to count down. When security services investigated the presence of the unauthorized van, they found it adorned with further instructions and an unarmed sampling of the explosives contained inside. The collective left the note to provide further information on the bomb and the unarmed dynamite to emphasize the seriousness of their intentions. Security staff, however, did not read these materials in the way the collective intended. Instead, they spotted the dynamite and prudently kept their distance, leaving the instructions unread. Eventually, security personnel ordered an evacuation and workers began to leave the building. However, their safe exit from the site was thwarted when the explosives detonated twelve minutes early. The van was obliterated,

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<sup>389</sup> For detailed description of the events leading up to and during the bombing, see Hansen, *Direct Action*, 239–266.



the facing wall of Litton Systems sheared off, and the area littered with rubble of brick, steel, and glass. Caught in the midst of this massive explosion, seven people—a mixture of security service personnel and industrial workers—were seriously injured. Why the bomb went off early, no one knows.<sup>390</sup>

For the collective, the bombing of BC Hydro's substation represented an effective application of guerrilla warfare rooted in laborious preparation, layered criminality, and thoughtful planning. In contrast to that action, the calamitous and chaotic nature of the Litton bombing highlighted the indeterminate, unpredictable, and unexpected consequences of armed struggle. In exploring the origins and outcomes of the Litton bombing, as well as putting the work of Direct Action into a broader pattern of anti-nuclear activism, this chapter argues that activist projects against the cruise missile were saturated with the unexpected. In the wake of the bombing, the expansion of national protests against Canada's participation in the cruise missile project—protests that brought tens of thousands of people into the streets of Vancouver, Regina, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax—challenged both the hopes of the Direct Action collective and the assumptions laid out by the advocates of non-violent civil disobedience. Neither engendering further sabotage, nor stifling dissent, the political aftermath of the bombing was marked by debate and ambiguity.

The chapter also demonstrates that, while many peace activists routinely claimed that the politics of non-violent civil disobedience were fundamentally at odds with those who had destroyed Litton, a closer look at the ideas, organization, and cultural dynamics that informed anti-nuclear movements reveal a more complicated and nuanced political environment. As will become clear, the peace movement was never of one mind when it came to the use and definition of force, sabotage, and violence. Embracing anarchist politics did not mean that one necessarily supported armed struggle; indeed, some anarchists rejected the application and use of the tactics deployed against Litton. Therefore, while there was much commentary in the wake of the bombing attempting to

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<sup>390</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 239–266. Direct Action was not the only clandestine group challenged by the technical nature of explosives. Members from both the Weather Underground and the New World Liberation Front lost their lives in bombing-related accidents. See Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 127–132; Cathy Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun: My Life and Times as a Weatherman* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 345–348; and Daniel Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*, 140–141. Customers and employees at a Seattle Safeway were also injured when the George Jackson Brigade warned of an imminent bombing, but no action was taken. See Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA*, 141–143.

conflate anarchism, sabotage, and the underground on the one hand, and above ground forms of anti-nuclear civil disobedience on the other, the reality remained much more complicated. Rather than expressing a clear political divide among activists, a close look at the struggles against the cruise missile highlights the unexpected entanglement of anarchism, anti-nuclear activism, sabotage, and non-violent civil disobedience.

To begin with, however, it is necessary to understand the cruise missile's technological and political origins. Bombs, not missile technologies, were the first systems that delivered a nuclear attack. Taken over their target by airplanes—as in the case of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—they were dropped on human communities from above. By the end of the 1950s, this approach changed as military planners introduced the prospect of delivering attacks by attaching nuclear warheads to powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles. Developed by both the United States and the Soviet Union, these technologies led to the strategic notion of mutually assured destruction, or MAD. Because each superpower had the capability of effectively retaliating against the nuclear aggression of the other, they could not afford to use their arsenals against their opponents without triggering the annihilation of both contenders.<sup>391</sup>

Although the race to acquire these new military technologies was most evident between the United States and the Soviet Union, Canada was deeply involved in the nuclear politics of the Cold War. During the 1950s, the United States and Canadian governments engaged in diplomatic conversations over the American military's deployment of atomic bombers through Canadian airspace, territory that offered the United States an important route north to the Soviet Union.<sup>392</sup> Canada and the United States expanded their co-operation in 1957 with the creation of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).<sup>393</sup> These military relationships were part and parcel of a broader pattern of military, political, and economic integration that took place during and after the Second World War, including policies aimed at coordinating military

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<sup>391</sup> For a broad overview of nuclear weapons in the context of geopolitics, see Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Richard Dean Burns and Joseph M. Siracusa, *A Global History of the Nuclear Arms Race*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013).

<sup>392</sup> John Clearwater, *US Nuclear Weapons in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 1999), 18.

<sup>393</sup> See Joseph Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States and the Origins of North American Air Defence, 1945–1948* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987); *Canada in NORAD 1957–2007: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

production, as well as the creation of new multinational military alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Canada supported the United States by allowing it to store American nuclear weapons on Canadian territory in the 1950s. Moreover, by the 1960s, Canada had begun the process of acquiring its own nuclear capacities. Here, the most well-known example was the stationing of Bomarc interceptor missiles, armed with American nuclear warheads, in both Ontario and Quebec, an action that made Canada the fourth nation in the world to hold a nuclear arsenal. Therefore, while the Canadian state attempted to create and exercise as much autonomy as possible within the global context of the Cold War, it remained tightly tied to the United States through the threads of economy, politics, and military organization.<sup>394</sup>

As Mark Eaton has noted, much of the historiography that has attempted to make sense of Canada's nuclear politics have focused on issues of diplomacy and state policy. Writing in 2007, Eaton highlighted the significant lack of historical attention to the movements that contested and resisted nuclear weapons in Canada. More recently, however, the growing body of historical writing on the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the long sixties has begun to fill that void. Generally speaking, this literature has emphasized that anti-nuclear and anti-militarist movements were an important feature of post-war Canadian life, but were also part of a global pattern of peace movement activism and anti-nuclear dissent.<sup>395</sup>

In explaining the development and importance of these movements, historians such as Benjamin Isitt, Bryan Palmer, and Michael Dufresne have been particularly attentive to the ways in which patterns of political change, continuity, and co-development marked post-war peace activism. In this sense, the shift from the 1940s and early 1950s to the mid 1960s saw important changes in both constituency and political outlook. Here, working-class peace activists connected to the labour movement

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<sup>394</sup> See Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2007); Albert Legault and Michel Fortmann, *A Diplomacy of Hope: Canada and Disarmament, 1945–1988*, trans. Derek Ellington (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992); and Dan Middlemiss, "The Road From Hyde Park: Canada-US Defence Economic Cooperation," in *Fifty Years of Canada-US Defense Cooperation: The Road From Ogdensburg*, ed. Joel J. Sokolsky and Joseph T. Jockel (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1992).

<sup>395</sup> Mark Eaton, "Canadians, Nuclear Weapons, and the Cold War Security Dilemma," (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 2007), 5.

and an Old Left political culture joined student radicals who were routinely part and parcel of the emerging New Left.<sup>396</sup>

At the same time, the line separating these two general bodies of activists was never fixed or static because the common issues of anti-militarism often engendered political mixing and co-operation. Moreover, the line between Old and New Left was—in both practice and theory—continually transgressed. As Palmer demonstrates, anti-militarist events, such as public meetings, lectures, and workshops provided social spaces where activists from a range of backgrounds interacted and mixed.<sup>397</sup> As a result, the emerging historiography on anti-nuclear politics in Canada has often emphasized the interconnections between socialist activism during the 1940s and 1950s and New Left forms of student activism during the 1960s.

As Bruce Douville has demonstrated, the anti-nuclear movements of the 1960s also reflected a turn towards more intersectional analyses in which activists tied debates over nuclear weapons to a broader array of political and social problems.<sup>398</sup> This was particularly true in British Columbia. In 1964, a range of young peace activists staged a number of protests, acts of civil disobedience, and direct actions to contest the instalment of nuclear weapons at Canadian Forces Base Comox on Vancouver Island, while struggles against American nuclear testing in the north Pacific led to the creation of the Don't Make a Wave Committee in 1969–1970, a movement that later became Greenpeace in 1971. Where the Comox activists made arguments that linked war resistance, non-violence, civil disobedience, and civil rights, the Don't Make a Wave Committee furthered the cross-connections between anti-nuclear war resistance and the emerging environmental movement.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 56–58, and 256–258; Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 64–68; and Michael Maurice Dufresne, “‘Let's Not Be Cremated Equal:’ The Combined Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1959–1967,” in *The Sixties in Canada*, 964.

<sup>397</sup> Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*, 257.

<sup>398</sup> Bruce Douville, “Project La Macaza: A Study of Two Canadian Peace Protests in the 1960s,” in *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance From 1812 to the War on Terror*, ed. Lara Campbell, Michael Dawson, and Catherine Gidney (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015): 161.

<sup>399</sup> For an extensive account of the Comox Project, see Peter Light, “Comox Project '65: An Analysis,” *Comox Project '65 Bulletin* 1, no. 1, ed. Peter Light and Malcom Fast (June 1965): 17–22. Larry Gambone, who was also a participant in the Comox Project, has published two short accounts of the group's development. See Gambone, *Another View From Anarchist Mountain*, 79–89; and Gambone, *No Regrets*, 26–29. On the formation of Greenpeace, see Harter,

Although struggles for nuclear disarmament never disappeared, they gained a renewed sense of political purchase during the second half of the 1970s and into the 1980s. In part, this shift resulted from the growing political and cultural influence of neoconservative administrations in the United States and Britain. In this sense, activists linked the urgency to resist nuclear weapons with struggles against new conservative opponents, such as Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, who they feared would be more likely to instigate military conflicts that would drag the world into a nuclear conflict.<sup>400</sup> Nevertheless, the expansion of new anti-nuclear movements was more than simply a reaction to the growing prowess of a hawkish neoconservative political culture. It was also a reaction to the development of new forms of military technology that sought to bypass the strategic stalemate that had developed between the United States and the Soviet Union, initiatives that predated the rise to power of Reagan and Thatcher.

During the 1970s, both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to break the technological deadlock associated with mutually assured destruction by developing new “first strike” nuclear capabilities, technologies that were thought to be capable of attacking an enemy while also eradicating their ability to launch a nuclear response. An important expression of this nuclear shift was the American military’s *Ohio*-class submarines. These submarines were often referred to as Trident submarines, named after the Trident ballistic missiles carried on board. Such missiles were armed with a multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle, or MIRV, which enable a single ballistic missile to deliver multiple nuclear warheads to a range of different locations. What separated this system from other ballistic missile technologies was not the missile itself, but the submarine, whose purpose was to silently slip into enemy territory in order to launch a surprise nuclear attack.<sup>401</sup>

When the US military announced in 1973 that it would house these new submarines at the Bangor naval facility west of Seattle, it provoked a diverse current of

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“Environmental Justice for Whom? Class, New Social Movements, and the Environment,” 83–119; and Zelko, *Make It a Greenpeace!*

<sup>400</sup> Douglas Rossinow, *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); James Cronin, *Global Rules: America, Britain and a Disordered World* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014).

<sup>401</sup> For an overview of activist campaigns against the Trident on the Pacific coast, see Brian Casserly, “Confronting the U.S. Navy at Bangor, 1973–1982.” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 95, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 130–139.

anti-nuclear protest and dissent on both sides of the US-Canada border. The most prominent group associated with these protests was the Pacific Life Community (PLC), a transnational network of activists based mostly out of southern British Columbia and northern Washington State. Drawing together activists from New Left, Quaker, Catholic Worker, and feminist movements, the PLC mobilized around tactics of non-violent civil disobedience in order to protest the Trident and link it to a broader array of anti-nuclear issues. Influenced by the tactics and political culture of civil rights movements and struggles against the Vietnam War, the PLC helped to organize a series of demonstrations and direct actions over the course of 1977–1979 that brought thousands of people to Bangor. As Brian Casserly has noted in his study of the Bangor protests, struggles against the Trident were part of a growing resurgence of anti-nuclear weapons activism during the second half of the 1970s, forms of organizing that were responding to new political and technological factors, yet they also retained a range of important connections to established patterns of anti-militarist dissent that marked the post-war period.<sup>402</sup>

Despite the growing emphasis on political, social, and cultural resurgence of anti-militarism in the United States since the 1960s, historians of social movement politics in Canada have been slower to address the nature of this resurgence north of the border. For those that have—historians such as Eaton and Clearwater—the development and resistance to the cruise missile has offered a critical setting from which to address an expanding wave of anti-nuclear dissent and social movement organizing. As both authors have demonstrated, debates over the testing of the cruise produced some of the largest political protests in Canadian history, engendering an expansion of anti-nuclear projects and organizing initiatives across the nation.<sup>403</sup> However, Direct Action’s attack against Litton Systems—perhaps one of the most dramatic aspects of the struggle against the cruise—remains largely unanalyzed. This is not to say that the bombing is missing from the historical narrative. On the contrary, it is often mentioned either as an aside or as an example of disaster in which a description of the explosion and workers’ injuries takes centre stage.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Casserly, “Confronting the U.S. Navy at Bangor, 1973–1982,” 135–136.

<sup>403</sup> Eaton, “Canadians, Nuclear Weapons, and the Cold War Security Dilemma,” 15–36.

<sup>404</sup> See Eaton, “Canadians, Nuclear Weapons, and the Cold War Security Dilemma,” 255–257; Clearwater, *Just Dummies*, 101–108.

What remains missing is a serious consideration of the politics and culture of the activists who carried out the bombing. Indeed, the bombing's connection to other forms of activism, its revolutionary logic, and its ambiguous impact on the wider movement of anti-cruise activism has not yet been explored by historians. Addressing these elements helps to contextualize and better explain what happened at Litton, while also unsettling two assumptions that developed in the wake of the bombing: first, that the bombing would lead to the subversion of political organizing; and second, that the conflicts it produced among activists reflected a binary split in opinion between anarchist violence and non-anarchist non-violence. Against these perceptions, the chapter demonstrates that the outcomes of the bombing, activist perspectives on sabotage and violence, and the relationship and connections between different forms of anti-nuclear activism were more complicated than is often assumed by historians and activists alike.

In order to adequately understand why Direct Action attacked Litton, as well as to understand the political outcomes of the bombing, it is first necessary to consider the history of non-violence civil disobedience that took place at Litton Systems beginning in the closing years of the 1970s. Such activism played a fundamental role in the creation of a mass movement against the cruise missile program, political mobilizations that were pivotal in inspiring Direct Action to target Litton. At the same time, focusing on the work of anti-militarists at Litton Systems also enables a broader understanding of Canadian anti-nuclear movements and their relationship to other forms of peace activism that were developing at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Although activists had many reasons to oppose nuclear technologies, the cruise missile was a significant target because of its specific technological nature. Unlike a ballistic missile, which blasted conspicuously into suborbital space before hurtling down to its terrestrial targets, the cruise was a guided missile, one designed for stealth. Capable of traveling long distances, it flew close to the ground to avoid detection and used advanced mapping and computer technologies to navigate its passage. Cresting over treetops and twisting through valleys, it was more akin to a pilotless aircraft than a conventional missile. This modern machine was not built in one place by one company, but through the combined work of dozens of corporations and subcontractors scattered across the United States and Canada. Litton Systems Canada, which contributed the missile's navigation system, was one of these subcontractors. Created in 1960 as a subsidiary of the Beverly Hills based corporation Litton Industries, Litton Systems

Canada had a long history of military production in the Toronto area, including providing navigation systems for a range of NATO military aircraft. In 1979, the company won the contract to produce the navigation system for the air-launched version of the cruise missile.<sup>405</sup>

The following year, American military planners began lobbying the Trudeau administration to allow for the testing of this missile in northern Alberta, suggesting that the terrain and climate closely matched the Russian environments in which the missile might later be used. Trudeau and others in his administration, particularly the Department of Industry, Trade, and Commerce, firmly supported the proposal. Such support signalled the historical relationships that tied together the Canadian and American military economies. Indeed, as John Clearwater has shown, Litton Systems Canada was awarded the cruise missile contract as part of a broader procurement agreement in which Ottawa had agreed to purchase American-made CF-18 fighter jets. Moreover, through the Defence Industry Productivity Program, the Canadian subsidiary had received close to 40 million dollars in government grants. Not only did these forms of direct state support signal to many that the Trudeau administration was firmly behind the cruise missile program, but the Department of National Defence and the Department of External Affairs also hinted that Ottawa's support for cruise testing could lead to Canadian companies acquiring further military contracts from south of the border.<sup>406</sup>

American and Canadian officials did their best to keep these discussions quiet and out of the public realm. For the Trudeau administration, it was clear that any support for the cruise missile project was going to be widely unpopular, in part because it exposed the prime minister to charges of blatant hypocrisy. Two years earlier, at the United Nations General Assembly's special session on disarmament, Trudeau had called for the end of the arms race through test bans and reductions in spending on the development of new nuclear weapons systems.<sup>407</sup> These rhetorical overtures were in

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<sup>405</sup> Boeing Aerospace Company, "AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile: Background information," (Seattle: Boeing Aerospace Company Public Relations, May 1980), 1–4; Boeing Aerospace Company, "Cruise Missiles — From 'Bugs' to Buzz Bombs to the B-52 Bomb Bay," (Seattle: Boeing Aerospace Company Public Relations, December 1980), 1–5; and Boeing Aerospace Company, "ALCM Guidance and Navigation System," (Seattle: Boeing Aerospace Company Public Relations, February 1981), 1–4, Box 12, Litton, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>406</sup> Clearwater, *Just Dummies*, 7–9.

<sup>407</sup> Clearwater, *Just Dummies*, 1–2.



obvious contradiction with state policy that used subsidization and diplomacy to support the production and testing of American nuclear weapons systems in Canada. Despite attempts to keep the issue of cruise testing buried until the agreement was signed, the issues inadvertently came to public attention in March of 1982 as journalists began probing into the procurement of the CF-18. When the press asked an American military spokesperson why the cost of the fighter jets was lower than expected, the official responded that it was in exchange for the Canadian government's support for the testing of the cruise missile.<sup>408</sup>

This produced outrage among large segments of the public who felt that the Canadian government was making important policy decisions behind closed doors and insisted that it was acting in contradiction to its calls for a de-escalation of the arms race.<sup>409</sup> From this opposition emerged a wave of anti-nuclear activism across the country. One of the most important activist groups involved in this work was the Cruise Missile Conversion Project (CMCP).<sup>410</sup> Predating the debate over missile's testing in Alberta, the CMCP developed over the course of 1979–1980 in response to Litton System Canada's participation in the cruise missile's production. Broadly speaking, the CMCP's objectives were two-fold: first, to educate the public about Litton System's participation in the nuclear arms industry, conversations that the group used to critique Canada's participation in the Cold War; and second, to use the tactics of non-violent civil disobedience, public protest, and work-place organizing to contest Litton System's direct participation in military production.

Like the Pacific Life Community and other emerging anti-nuclear networks of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the CMCP had strong religious connections. The majority of the eight individuals who came together to form the CMCP were active in either Catholic or Protestant communities. Rosemary Cook, a founding member of the CMCP, was a practicing Catholic. Joe Mihevc, also Catholic, was an organizer with a Toronto Christian youth group. Other early CMCP members, such as Murray McAdam, had worked with

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<sup>408</sup> Clearwater, *Just Dummies*, 13–14.

<sup>409</sup> Clearwater, *Just Dummies*, 15–19.

<sup>410</sup> Before taking on the name Cruise Missile Conversion Project, the group was briefly called the Coalition to Stop the Cruise. For a short account of the group's early activity, see Coalition to Stop the Cruise, "A Cruise to Disaster: Canadian Involvement in the Manufacture of Nuclear Armaments," leaflet, [n.d.], untitled folder 2, Box 11, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

both the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church. Several others, including Frank Showler and Tom Joyce, were Quakers. The CMCP also worked closely with Christian related peace projects such as Project Plowshares. Connected to the United Church of Canada, the Mennonite-run Conrad Grebel College at the University of Waterloo, and the Canadian Council of Churches, Project Plowshares sought to promote national, international, and defence policy alternatives that were anti-militarist in nature. The CMCP also created strong bonds with activist Christian communities south of the border, including the Catholic Worker network.<sup>411</sup>

Although religious activity and belief influenced the personal motives of many members as well as some aspects of the CMCP's public discourse and culture, they did not root their political objectives in proselytism. As Joe Mihevc recalled in an interview, "this wasn't about Jesus. But there was a spiritual thread in that group."<sup>412</sup> If the CMCP did not preach the gospel of Christ, it did attempt to initiate and spread a different form of conversion. The CMCP was part of a broader array of anti-militarist movements during the 1970s and 1980s that attempted to redirect military production into non-military uses, an alternative industrial program often referred to as "economic conversion."<sup>413</sup> This reflected an emerging pattern of anti-nuclear and anti-militarist organizing that was taking place across North America, the United Kingdom, and Europe. One of the most renowned hubs for this activism was the English labour movement, where workers involved in military production developed detailed economic conversion plans for industries in which they worked, activism that led the workers to be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Across the Atlantic, large industrial unions in Canada and the United States, including the United Electrical Workers, the United Auto Workers, and the International Association of Machinists were likewise vocal in their support for the conversion of military production.<sup>414</sup> Community-based conversion projects were also a prominent part of anti-nuclear anti-militarist activism in the United States beginning in the

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<sup>411</sup> Joe Mihevc, interview with author, 31 May 2012.

<sup>412</sup> Joe Mihevc, interview with author, 31 May 2012.

<sup>413</sup> Donald M. Wells, "Conversion of Military Production in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 27 (1988): 113–136.

<sup>414</sup> Murray MacAdam, "Swords into Plowshares: The Cruise Missile Conversion Project," *Canadian Forum* (August 1982): 21, 25, Cruise Missile Conversion Project Clippings, Box 15, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers; David Collins, "Conversion Planning a Must," in *A Case For Non-Violent Resistance*, ed. Cruise Missile Conversion Project (Toronto: Cruise Missile Conversion Project, 1985), 6–7.

mid 1970s. These included the Rocky Flats Conversion Project in Colorado, the Puget Sound Conversion Project in Washington State, the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project, the Bay State Conversion Project in Massachusetts, and the California-based Mid-Peninsula Conversion Project and Orange County Peace Conversion Projects.<sup>415</sup>

Two general trends sat at the heart of this activism. The first reflected a range of critiques of the assumption that investing in military production was an effective means of creating jobs and supporting economic development. Instead, the proponents of conversion argued that military spending diverted investment capital away from non-military segments of the market in ways that decreased productivity and increased inflation. Moreover, because military production was more capital intensive than civilian industries, it created far fewer jobs than non-military forms of production. Critics such as the CMCP maintained that military spending short-changed the public as a whole, not just workers, as escalating defence budgets required the diversion of funds from other sectors such as health, education, and social services.<sup>416</sup>

These critiques of military production led to the second general trend of economic conversion: if the state shifted the skills, labour, capital, and infrastructure of military production towards civilian applications, it would enhance employment and economic growth. For the CMCP and other proponents of conversion, the planning for this process would come from the workers themselves. Conversion aligned closely to the promotion of workplace organizing and struggles for worker self-management. In its critiques of the arms industry and its emphasis on working-class empowerment, economic conversion is therefore best understood, as Donald Wells has argued, as both a process of alternative industrial planning and as an expression of political critique, agitation, and mobilization rooted in the terrain of local extra-parliamentary grass-roots activism.<sup>417</sup> This was certainly the case for the CMCP, which used various forms of community organizing to attempt to connect with workers inside Litton Systems—connections they hoped would form the basis for economic conversion—while

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<sup>415</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Just Over the Border," [n.d.], Litton Leaflets, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>416</sup> Murray MacAdam, "Swords into Plowshares: The Cruise Missile Conversion Project," 21, 25; Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Retooling for Peace," [n.d.], Litton Leaflets, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers; Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Organized Labour and the Cruise Missile," [n.d.], Litton Leaflets, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>417</sup> Wells, "Conversion of Military Production in Canada," 114.

developing public forms of education and agitation over Canada's contribution to the cruise missile project and the arms industry and Cold War politics more generally.

In order to struggle towards these economic and political reforms, the CMCP developed activist strategies that mixed public education, workplace organizing, and forms of non-violent civil disobedience. Like other conversion groups, the CMCP understood that any chance at shifting production at Litton would require the support of the workers themselves. Because the facility was not a union shop, outside activists did not have institutionalized support to help mobilize or connect them with workers. Instead, the CMCP tried to reach the rank-and-file through leafleting, passing out literature to Litton employees as they left or entered the plant.<sup>418</sup>

Leafleting was a critical and continuous part of the CMCP's activism, a long-term strategy that its members viewed as essential in the struggle against the cruise. Activists traveled to Litton every week, handing out hundreds of leaflets with each visit.<sup>419</sup> Standing outside the plant, having their writing taken, rebuffed, or ignored, the CMCP was abundantly aware of the challenges they faced in trying to forge relationships with the individuals who were making the military systems they opposed. Indeed, leaflets were often written in ways that made these challenges in communication a central part of the CMCP's narrative. For example, in the wake of a weeklong protest in April 1981, actions in which 800 people marched to protest outside of the Litton System's plant, the CMCP returned the following week and distributed leaflets that asked workers how the event had impacted them. In doing so, the CMCP thanked those workers who continued to stop and talk with them, but also emphasized that they understood the resentment clearly expressed by other workers, maintaining that "we know that those of you who are annoyed and angry are affected by our actions."<sup>420</sup> These communications reflected the CMCP's attempts to be as "sensitive as possible" to the workers employed at Litton, workers that they understood as being "victims" rather than "opponents."<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Joe Mihevc, interview with author, 31 May 2012; Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Research for Leaflets, Self Education, Media," [n.d.], untitled folder 2, Box 11; Joe Mihevc, "Project: Leafleting," [n.d.], untitled folder, Box 11, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>419</sup> Joe Mihevc, interview with author, 31 May 2012; Joe Mihevc, "Project: Leafleting."

<sup>420</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Looking Back on April 12-17," [n.d.], Litton Leaflets, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>421</sup> Joe Mihvec, "Project: Leafleting."

In addition to strategies based on empathy, leaflet narratives also attempted to tie the CMCP's nuclear policy and production concerns to a broader array of labour issues. For example, in the leaflet "Retooling for Peace," the CMCP pushed workers to consider not only the physical harm associated with nuclear war, but also the boom and bust nature of military production. If arms reduction diplomacy, market dynamics, or technological change resulted in decreased production, then workers could expect layoffs or a reduction in work.<sup>422</sup> In "Organized Labour and the Cruise Missile," the CMCP argued that unionization was an essential tool for working-class empowerment. Therefore, the CMCP promoted labour organization in the hopes that it would enable workers to change the direction of production at Litton.<sup>423</sup> This reading directly connects economic conversion with "workers' rights," maintaining that "full employment, job security, workers' rights to form a union, equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave and health and safety in the workplace are as important as cutting off the weapons system."<sup>424</sup> Other leaflets emphasized economic conversion applications in the United States and Britain, highlighted the economic advantages of non-military production for workers, and spoke of the struggles that individual members of the CMCP experienced in their own jobs, struggles that the group used to attempted to express solidarity with workers at Litton.<sup>425</sup>

While the CMCP understood leafleting as a tactic to educate and mobilize workers, they also understood it as having two additional objectives. First, maintaining a regular physical presence outside the plant was a "visible sign to the company of people who are against [Litton's] involvement in the escalating arms race."<sup>426</sup> Therefore, being present at Litton was both a contribution to and a reflection of a wider pattern of antinuclear struggle. Second, leafleting was part of an expression of persistent and continuous opposition to Litton System's participation in the cruise missile project

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<sup>422</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Retooling for Peace."

<sup>423</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Organized Labour the Cruise Missile."

<sup>424</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Retooling for Peace."

<sup>425</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Over the border," [n.d.]; "Do you recognize this map?" [n.d.]; "What is the Cruise Missile Conversion Project?" [n.d.]; "Are nuclear weapons going to protect us?" [n.d.]; "We all need jobs!" [n.d.], Litton Leaflets, Box 12, Joe Mihvec Personal Papers.

<sup>426</sup> Mihvec, "Project: Leafleting."

through the medium of public pressure.<sup>427</sup>

CMCP also used of more confrontational forms of resistance and civil disobedience in its campaign against Litton, including marches, rallies, symbolic political actions, and moments of guerrilla theatre, and illegal action such as sit-down blockades in which chains of activists sat down on the ground and refused to move, effectively blocking the entrance to Litton System's facility in Rexdale before being arrested by the police. Such was the case on 8 April 1982, when the CMCP organized a large demonstration against Litton. Reflecting the Christian political culture of the CMCP, the event was held on the opening day of the Easter Triduum. Holding their action on Holy Thursday, roughly 2,000 people attended the event outside the Litton plant and police arrested thirty-four activists for trespassing.<sup>428</sup> Activists with the CMCP also came to the event armed with baby bottles filled with their own blood. In a gesture that sought to emphasize their passion and physical commitment to non-violent civil disobedience, the activists sprayed their vital fluids onto the ground.<sup>429</sup>

The emerging literature on the struggles against nuclear weapons in Canada during the 1980s has often noted how local movements and instances of protest paralleled activist projects elsewhere. The geo-political dynamics of nuclear policy and technology anchored in the activity of various nation-states led to an equally sprawling geo-political resistance of opposition groups. What has remained under-explored, however, are the ways in which Canadian movements not only paralleled and reflected these expanding patterns of antimilitarist dissent, but also actively interacted with their counterparts in other places. Indeed, anti-nuclear movements in Canada routinely organized their political projects with and through interactions with movements elsewhere.

The CMCP exemplified this process. Locally situated in a struggle against Toronto's Litton Systems, the group was also part of a continually changing and geographically diverse anti-nuclear network. Within Canada, the CMCP played an

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<sup>427</sup> Mihvec, "Project: Leafleting."

<sup>428</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, correspondence to unspecified recipient, 26 May 1982, 1–2, Litton, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>429</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, meeting minutes, 17 March 1982, 1–2, Litton, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

important role in the creation of other anti-militarist projects, including the Alliance for Non-violent Action and the Toronto Disarmament Network, as well as participating in the Against Cruise Testing coalition and other anti-cruise organizations, movements, and short term ad hoc groups that flourished after the testing issue became public knowledge in 1982.<sup>430</sup> At the same time, the CMCP organized with activists outside of Canada. By traveling to anti-nuclear conferences, workshops, and protests, as well as through the global exchange of political information with disparate groups and movements, the Cruise Missile Conversion Project demonstrates how antimilitarist movements in Canada intersected and supported a broader array of antinuclear struggles.

Building connections across space was the explicit objective of the CMCP's Networking Committee, which constructed an extensive array of movement connections, primarily through the power of the post. Just as anarchist projects such as *Open Road* had built their own political networks based on the subscription information of pre-existing periodicals such as the *Yipster Times*, the CMCP was able to reach nearly five thousand Canadians when the left-wing political magazine *Canadian Forum* allowed the group to have access to its members' address information.<sup>431</sup> From this and other sources, the CMCP began corresponding and connecting with activists around the world. This included over twenty-five Canadian organizations focused on general peace issues, forty groups and individuals associated with the Alliance for Non-Violent Action, thirty anti-militarist groups and individuals in New York State, and another thirty spread out across Europe. In addition, the Networking Committee also made contact with activists in twenty different "resistance communities," twenty-five feminist and women's groups, thirty-five to forty anti-cruise and anti-pershing missile projects, twenty-five Third World support groups, as well as a complete contact list of Catholic Worker houses.<sup>432</sup>

The CMCP demonstrates that the struggle against the production of the cruise at Litton Systems was part of longer pattern of anti-nuclear activism that stretched throughout the post-war period. Generally located on the left, these activist currents were nevertheless diverse in their constituencies, tactics, and ideological and cultural

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<sup>430</sup> Joe Mihevc, interview with author, 31 May 2012.

<sup>431</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, "Fundraising Meeting", minutes, [n.d.], Litton, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>432</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, Networking Committee meeting minutes, 23 June, 1–2, Litton, Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

frameworks. While the CMCP reflected past traditions, they were also part of an emerging global pattern of anti-militarist project that were operating through the late 1970s and early 1980s. Similar sites across North America and Europe saw events that mirrored those that occurred outside the gates of Litton Systems in Toronto. Although these anti-nuclear projects were spread over the world, and therefore physically disconnected, the activity of the CMCP also demonstrates that these movements found ways to bridge spatial gaps. Despite the geographic separation, personal affiliations, organizational networks, and shared analyses and tactics connected these seemingly diverse movements.

The anarchist community in Vancouver, and the Direct Action collective in particular, were part of a re-emergence of anti-nuclear activism in the second half of the 1970s. Although Doug Stewart and Gerry Hannah did not participate in the attack against Litton Systems, both were firm critics of nuclearism in its various forms. As a member of the Subhumans, Hannah was a part the section of Vancouver's punk scene that continually supported social movement activism, an environment in which anti-nuclear politics loomed large. Likewise, Stewart was an avid environmentalist who had worked with various anti-nuclear currents in the city, particularly the Pacific Life Community. This activity intersected and paralleled with the work of Brent Taylor, Jill Bend, and other Vancouver anarchists who helped to organize a range of anti-nuclear rallies and events in Vancouver at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>433</sup>

Globally, the growth and rejuvenation of these anti-nuclear and anti-militarist currents were both inspiring and frustrating for activists interested in revolutionary political transformations. Certainly, anarchists connected to the Direct Action collective looked favourably upon the expanding cultural and tactical influence of decentralization and direct action that characterized many aspects of the anti-nuclear movement. Indeed, anarchists were often participants in characteristic moments of struggle, not only in Vancouver, but also at major anti-nuclear protests south of the border in places such as Bangor and Seabrook. With its close proximity to southern British Columbia, Bangor was

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<sup>433</sup> For the relationship between Vancouver's emerging punk scene, anarchism, and anti-nuclear politics, see Martin, "The Blurred Boundaries of Anarchism and Punk in Vancouver," 36–37. For Direct Action's connection to anti-nuclear organizing see, Brent Taylor, interview with author, 13 March 2012; interview with author, 26 March 2012; Jill Bend, interview with author, 3 October 2012; Jill Bend Personal Materials, Doug Stewart, interview with Margo Harper, 1983; "Interview: Gerry Hannah," in *Prison Journal* 4 (December 1984), 89.



a particularly important location for Canadian activists. Firmly opposing the development of new nuclear technologies and the expansion of American military power, Jill Bend, Brent Taylor, and other Vancouver anarchists came together with other anti-militarists from Vancouver, forming affinity groups that traveled south into Washington State to partake in the Bangor occupation.<sup>434</sup>

While events at Bangor were heartening in many ways, participating in the occupation also exposed tensions between different activist currents. As the struggles against BC Hydro on Texada Island illustrated, civil disobedience often engendered instances of inter-activist conflict, exposing disparate views on the definition, meaning, and practice of violence, non-violence, organization, and authority. This was certainly true of Taylor and Bend's time at Bangor. The tendency for some activists to define attacks against property as a form of violence, and their criticisms of those who embraced sabotage as a legitimate tactic, frustrated the two anarchists. Taylor and Bend were also critical of activists who planned to be arrested as a form of political resistance. For the two anarchists, these tactics and political analyses reflected a culture of activist passivity that limited the potential of the Bangor occupation. In order to model an alternative approach, they attempted to push the anti-nuclear movement to adopt more aggressive tactics of confrontation. Bend and Taylor expressly rejected the models of non-violent civil disobedience that the event's organizers had envisioned. Instead, they attempted to attack the infrastructure of the construction site, scuffle with security services, and evade arrest.<sup>435</sup>

This interest in broadening the scope of tactics within the anti-nuclear movement motivated Direct Action to attack Litton Systems. As with their assault against BC Hydro, Direct Action intended the attack to be an act of sabotage. For the collective, this meant that they positioned the bombing as both a destructive act against property and an act of communication and agitation. While they did not believe that their attacks alone would scuttle Canada's contribution to the cruise missile program in any comprehensive sense, they did hope that the bombing would make the project more difficult by slowing down

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<sup>434</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February, 2012, and 22 March 2012; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 13 March 2012. See also, Tony Doinel, "Pacific Life Community puts heat on nuclear arms," *Open Road* 1 (1976): 7; "Anti-Nukes Fall Out," *Open Road* 10 ½ (Fall 1979): 3.

<sup>435</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February, 2012, and 22 March 2012; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 13 March 2012; "Anti-Nukes Fall Out," 3.

the production of the missile's navigation system. In this sense, Direct Action believed that any act of property destruction that postponed the development of the cruise or made its construction more difficult was a worthwhile and desirable form of resistance. Reflecting a broad social anxiety over the intense destructive potential of nuclear arsenals, the collective maintained that sabotage was a legitimate form of self-defence against a much more extensive form of nuclear violence. Therefore, they maintained that, "we believe that militant direct action must be used as an attempt to keep uncompleted, or at least slow-down [sic], the programs and technologies which are bringing about our own destruction."<sup>436</sup> There was "every reason imaginable to tear down the systems and makers of nuclear war: for the survival of all life on Earth, for people's hopes and visions, and for the possibilities of a liveable future."<sup>437</sup>

To ensure this future, the collective believed that the public ought to resist nuclearism, not just in Toronto, but everywhere. In addition to operating as a local act of resistance, Direct Action also designed the bombing as a form of agitation and communication that they hoped would inspire future acts of sabotage and direct action against other manifestations of nuclear militarization. In this sense, the bomb sought to "tear down" Litton, while also functioning as a "springboard" to new forms of "consciousness and organization" in the future. To do so, Direct Action argued that the decentralized model of military production could be challenged by an equally decentralized pattern of resistance:

We believe that people must actively fight the nuclear war system in whatever forms they exist and wherever they exist. Although, in total, the nuclear militarization of the world is a vast and seemingly unfathomable and omnipotent network, it can be understood and effectively resisted when we recognize that it is designed, built and operated in thousands of separate facilities and industries spread throughout the world. By analysing the interests and institutions in our own regions that are contributing to the nuclear build up we find the smaller component pieces of the nuclear network that are realistic targets for direct confrontation and sabotage.<sup>438</sup>

As a result, the collective intended for the bombing of Litton to blast beyond the local and into the hearts and minds of activist communities elsewhere. Like the CMCP and other anti-nuclear movements, Direct Action understood and developed their tactics against

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<sup>436</sup> Direct Action, "The Litton Bombing Communiqué," reproduced in Hansen, *Direct Action*, 486.

<sup>437</sup> Direct Action, "The Litton Bombing Communiqué," 481.

<sup>438</sup> Direct Action, "The Litton Bombing Communiqué," 482.

Litton Systems through a transnational analysis of the organization of nuclear technologies and social movement activism. At the same time, as a clandestine group, Direct Action lacked the ability to organize across borders in ways that the CMCP and other aboveground groups could. While Direct Action had been a part of the expansion of new anti-nuclear projects and transnational networks, their shift into the underground changed the character of their relationship to the wider anti-nuclear and anti-militarist networks of the early 1980s. For Direct Action, sabotage was a tactic imbued with the power to inflict physical damage against the infrastructure of capital and the state, and to use militant actions as a means to organize both locally and globally. While the bombing focused on one factory in one part of the world, it was also an expression of a collective pattern of anti-nuclear politics. It was both a response to the perceived limits of earlier activist projects and an attempt to expand the scope and character of that resistance.

The media covered the Litton bombing extensively. On the nightly news and in the papers, people throughout Canada and beyond viewed images of the factory's shattered façade. With the experiences of injured workers at the forefront of these media narratives, interpretations of the bombing were predictably negative. Capturing much of this tone, the *Globe and Mail* labeled those responsible for the bombing as "crazy" and "despicable," subjects who "make no contribution to whatever cause they claim to participate in." The paper argued that instead of embodying the "legitimate" tactics of peaceful anti-nuclear groups, Direct Action reflected a form of politics that was illogical, morally reprehensible, and foreign, suggesting "they bring mindless and cowardly destruction into a country which has tried to settle its disputes according to the law."<sup>439</sup> Although they were generally less hyperbolic than the *Globe and Mail*, anti-nuclear activists connected to the CMCP and the Christian Movement for Peace were also critical of the bombing. Speaking to the *Nuclear Free Press*, individuals from both groups argued the commonly held assumption that the bombing would intimidate the public and

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<sup>439</sup> "Insanity at work," *Globe and Mail*, 16 October 1982, 6. Anonymous activists connected to the Free the Five campaign have created two extensive collections in which they compiled examples of mainstream media framings of Direct Action, both in print and television broadcasting. For the collection of print materials, see "Some Notes on the Print Media," in *Trial By Media*, ed. Anonymous (self-published work, [1982/3?]), unsorted materials, Spartacus Books Archives. For the collection of broadcasted materials, see *Trial By Media*, edited video compilation, [n.d.], Compact Disc, Jill Bend Personal Materials.

setback the political impact of the peace movement.<sup>440</sup> While this discourse saturated much of the media coverage of the Litton bombing, as well as the eventual arrest and trial of Direct Action, the political aftermath of the Litton bombing did not turn out as activists had predicted nor did it reflect the simple political assessments provided by the media.

The collective's association with anarchism fuelled problematic media assumptions that conflated anarchism with armed violence.<sup>441</sup> Behind the media stereotype of the mad and mindless anarchist bomber were a diverse and nuanced array of anarchist approaches to the definition, meaning, and use of armed action. Few promoted the turn to armed struggle as strongly as the Italian activist, Alfredo Bonanno. While Direct Action sought to develop armed action to overcome what they saw as the limitations of non-violence and address the geographical challenges that came with the decentralized structure of the military-industrial complex, then anarchists such as Bonanno sought to promote armed struggle to address the psychological and cultural limitations of the radical left. These concerns emerged out of the political violence that marked radical political life in Italy, West Germany, Spain and other European nations during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Here, an ideologically eclectic array of clandestine left movements assassinated, lamed, kidnapped, and assaulted their opponents, particularly those individuals who represented and exercised the violence of the state. Judges, police officers, military officials, capitalists, foremen, and managers, as well as members of the right-wing media, were subjected to individual acts of violence.<sup>442</sup>

In his famous 1977 work *Armed Joy*, Bonanno suggested that these forms of violence raised important questions about the emotional character and organization of political resistance.<sup>443</sup> For Bonanno, the revolutionary left suffered from an obsession with revolutionary dogma. The unending search for analytical perfection and purity immobilized radical communities. As a result, the vitality of these movements declined

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<sup>440</sup> "The Bombing: Direct Action's Violence Angers the Peace Movement," *Nuclear Free Press* 16 (Winter 1982/1983): 8; Murray MacAdam, "Litton Protest Met by Army of Police," *Nuclear Free Press* 16 (Winter 1982/1983): 8.

<sup>441</sup> Jock Ferguson, "RCMP aid Litton bomb probe," *Globe and Mail*, 23 October 1982, 5.

<sup>442</sup> For examples, see Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State*; Varon, *Bringing the War Home*; and Christie, *Granny Made Me an Anarchist*.

<sup>443</sup> Alfredo Bonanno, *Armed Joy*, trans. Jean Weir (Santa Cruz, CA: Quiver Distro, 2006), 5, originally published in 1977 by Edizioni Anarchismo, Catania, Italy.

under the crushing weight of the left's literary canon. Commenting on the connections between revolutionary practice and affect in left literature, Bonanno maintained that there was "never anything about joy in these tomes. The austerity of the cloister has nothing to envy of the stifling atmosphere one breathes in their pages." This stifling environment extended beyond the walls of left cloisters and into the street in ways that limited the revolutionary potential of the left. Bonanno maintained that the left's revolutionary "priests" had created a conservative political culture based on fantasies of "orderly revolutions, neatly drawn up principles, anarchy without turbulence." When political, social, or cultural events failed to conform to those imaginations, the priests "start screaming, yelling loud enough for the police to hear them."<sup>444</sup>

What Bonanno proposed instead was a politics of immediate and uninhibited action unconstrained by traditional, theoretical proscriptions. In prose that was frank, poetic, and macabre, he maintained that

[p]eople are tired of meetings, the classics, pointless marches, theoretical discussions that split hairs in four; endless distinctions, the monotony and poverty of certain political analyses. They prefer to make love, smoke, listen to music, go for walks, sleep, laugh, play, kill policemen, lame journalists, kill judges, blow up barracks....Hurry comrade, shoot the policeman, the judge, the boss. Now, before a new policeman prevents you. Hurry to say no, before the new repression convinces you that saying no is useless, mad, and that you should accept the hospitality of the mental asylum. Hurry to attack capital, before a new ideology makes it sacred to you. Hurry to play. Hurry to arm yourself.<sup>445</sup>

Bonanno proposed that violence was a way to resist the neutralization of dissent that came from accepting a culture of fear, hopelessness, and inaction. Nevertheless, he also understood revolutionary violence to be extraordinarily problematic, although his concerns were not about the acts of violence themselves, but instead hinged on the political organization and emotional character that animated and informed that violence. Specifically, Bonanno maintained that revolutionary violence needed to be cleansed of the left's presumed obsession with professionalism and clinical, dispassionate analysis. It was in this context that he emphasized that armed action could be a form of "play."<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Bonanno, *Armed Joy*, 6.

<sup>445</sup> Bonanno, *Armed Joy*, 26–27.

<sup>446</sup> Bonanno, *Armed Joy*, 27.

For Bonanno, joyous approaches to violence offered a refreshing respite from the doom and gloom of left culture. Yet, they also spoke of the need to break away from systematizing armed struggle. Elaborating on this point, Bonanno warned that armed struggle ought not to be taken too seriously lest it be transformed into a new orthodoxy. In particular, he warned of the process through which such an organizing framework pushed militants into a cycle of superficial, reciprocal violence with their opponents. For Bonanno, these oscillating currents of spectacular attack and counter-attack between security services and leftist urban guerrillas created a spectacle that obscured meaningful alternatives. Thus, while the “guillotine” might have its uses, “revolutionaries must be aware of the limitations of such arms.”<sup>447</sup> Certainly, if armed struggle was to be effective, Bonanno argued that it would have to be applied in the context of joy rather than through an obsession with death or duty.<sup>448</sup>

*Armed Joy* offered a particular celebration of violence. Like Direct Action, Bonanno’s related his theorization of armed action to both the limitations of the left as well as the political and cultural dynamics of the left’s opposition. However, Bonanno’s framework also operated on a different set of presumptions. Direct Action’s emphasis on targeting infrastructure rather than individuals was based on a different revolutionary logic. By attacking targets that had been the subject of extensive public protest, Direct Action emphasized sabotage as a way of contributing to specific forms of collective struggle. In contrast, Bonanno saw armed struggle’s most immediate purpose as transforming the individual perpetrator of that violence. In his view, armed struggle was not designed to serve social movements. Instead, it functioned as a form of individual consciousness raising and cultural transformation.

While Bonanno’s text offered a celebration of violence, its framing of what that violence would look like, how it would operate, and what political motives and cultures lay behind its use strengthen our understanding of anarchism’s relationship with armed struggle. *Armed Joy* demonstrated that, even among those activists who most embraced the idea of violent insurrection, the use of violence was anything but “mindless,” as the *Globe and Mail* had maintained. Instead, a close look at Bonanno’s work reveals that the turn to revolutionary violence emerged from an assessment of historical contexts,

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<sup>447</sup> Bonanno, *Armed Joy*, 18.

<sup>448</sup> Bonanno, *Armed Joy*, 24.

reflecting a desire to overcome certain political problems and achieve an imagined future. For some anarchists, then, revolutionary violence offered a logical means to create meaningful resistance and political transformation.

For other anarchists, however, armed struggle was detrimental to revolutionary politics. Here, anarchist critics of armed struggle argued that these tactics were inconsistent with the fundamentals of anarchist praxis and maintained that they led to the subversion, rather than the expansion, of radical political activity. One of the most developed examples of this critique was the short treatise, *You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism*. First published in 1979 by a group of Australian anarchist and libertarian socialists, the treatise was reproduced in various forms, including a 1981 Canadian version edited and released by the Anarchist Communist Federation. At the root of its analysis, *You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship* maintained that the close relationship between process and substantive outcome defined anarchism. If one used violence as a method of building a new society, then that new society would reflect that methodological violence. While the authors suggested that terrorism—what they defined as the “systematic use of violence against people for political ends”—was not necessarily synonymous with guerrilla tactics, they maintained that urban guerrilla movements were nearly guaranteed to take up the tactics of terrorism. This argument developed from the presumption that guerrilla groups saw armed confrontation with the state as the best method for sparking revolutionary activity. If fighting the state with arms was the single most important act militants could take in the pursuit of revolution, then this process would inevitably involve physical violence against human subjects. In this sense, *You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship* positioned urban guerrilla activity as a Pandora's box of revolutionary violence. Once opened, chaos and death were inevitable.<sup>449</sup>

For the authors, this process led to the subversion of revolutionary politics through increased repression of activists and the marginalization of popular, grassroots organizing. While attacking the state with arms endangered the lives of militants, *You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship* maintained that it also endangered the public as a whole, since governments would use these conflicts as a pretext to usher in wide

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<sup>449</sup> *You Can't Blow-up a Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism* (Tucson: See Sharp Press, 2006) 10–11.

reaching oppressive policies. Elaborating on the widely held anarchist perspective that the state was an inherently violent apparatus, the authors proposed that the application and intensity of that violence was shaped by external political conditions. Therefore, it was “the degree to which the state feels challenged that determines its use of terror, not constitutions or democratic principles. When they are threatened by a serious organized revolutionary movement, the Western democracies will display the full range of horrific methods.” To illustrate their point, the authors highlighted the violence of the British state in Northern Ireland and French security services in Algeria, among other examples.<sup>450</sup>

Supporting the notion that revolutionary politics required a militant challenge to the state, *You Can't Blow Up a Social Relationship* argued that force needed to be based on a massive social mobilization, a process that required popular political participation. For the authors, the armed actions of a militant minority negated this objective. Using the metaphor of a stage production, they maintained that armed confrontations between leftists and the state unfolded in front of the public like a “drama.” The public witnessed political struggle, but the violence did not provide a movement in which the general population could participate. Worse still, the authors alleged that this drama followed a tragically ironic plot line. As “the guerrillas lie dead about the stage, the audience of masses finds itself surrounded by barbed wire, and, while it might now feel impelled to take the stage itself, it finds a line of tanks blocking it and weakly flies out to remain passive again.”<sup>451</sup> In this sense, physical repression and political marginalization emerged as the chief products of guerrilla action. The authors maintained that, in taking on the role of a “vanguard” force, guerrillas limited the ability of the public to participate in political struggle.<sup>452</sup>

Anarchists in Italy, Australia, and Canada created nuanced considerations of armed struggle at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s that both supported and challenged anarchism's relationship with political violence, and Direct Action's attack on Litton provided a setting in which these debates could take on a renewed focus. Rather than expressing unified support for the bombing, anarchists in Canada developed a wide range of responses that reflected the complex relationship between armed struggle and

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<sup>450</sup> *You Can't Blow-up a Social Relationship*, 9.

<sup>451</sup> *You Can't Blow-up a Social Relationship*, 14.

<sup>452</sup> *You Can't Blow-up a Social Relationship*, 8.



anarchism.<sup>453</sup>

Certainly, some anarchists reacted to the Litton bombing with horror and anger. Writing in the Toronto anarchist paper, *Kick It Over*, one commentator deemed the attack a “publicity gimmick.” In this assessment, Direct Action “produced no threat to the war machine. They produced a spectacle in the six o’clock news for all the marginalized radicals to salivate over.” Reflecting arguments found in both *Armed Joy* and *You Can’t Blow Up a Social Relationship*, the commentator used the idea of spectacle to suggest that Direct Action’s attack on Litton would alienate the public from participating in radical political activity. To further emphasize Direct Action’s separation from the country’s mass political movements, the author went on to label the attack on Litton as an act of “vanguard terror.” Once again, the issue was not so much the use of violence itself, but the process used to inflict it. As the author conceded, violence might, in some instances, be a legitimate political option. However, Direct Action’s use of armed struggle was inappropriate because the public had no control over how those forms of struggle were defined, applied, or organized.<sup>454</sup>

“Vanguard Terror vs. State Terror: An Anarchist Critique of the Litton Bombing,” a short treatise released by an unnamed collective of Toronto area anarchists, articulated a similar point.<sup>455</sup> Likewise, the Toronto anarchist journal *Strike!* drew explicitly from *You Can’t Blow Up a Social Revolution* to emphasize the importance of mass struggle. It concluded that Direct Action represented “authoritarian” politics and “vanguardist guerrillaism”—pejorative terms that, in the anarchist lexicon, raised the spectre of Leninism.<sup>456</sup> These anarchist critiques again refrained from a categorical rejection of political violence, focusing instead on the political context in which those tactics were used and organized. Those who charged Direct Action with “vanguardism” denied the connection between anarchism and armed struggle, not because anarchism was inherently non-violent, but rather because of the way in which Direct Action had monopolized that violence. In this sense, the very act of creating an armed clandestine

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<sup>453</sup> Since Direct Action began their bombings, anarchists have continued to debate the effectiveness, meaning, definition, and significance of this activity. As a result, this chapter will limit itself to selections of the anarchist response during the first two years following the bombing.

<sup>454</sup> “Footnotes on Litton,” *Kick It Over* (May 1983): 22.

<sup>455</sup> “To Bomb or Not to Bomb?—That is the Question,” *Kick It Over* (February 1983): 4–5.

<sup>456</sup> Lazarus Jones, “Bombing the Bombers,” *Strike!* (November 1982): 5.

force disqualified Direct Action as an anarchist collective.

Other Toronto anarchists were more supportive. For example, in the wake of the Direct Action attacks, an anonymous collective of anarchists created the “Indirect Action” collective. Maintaining that they did not wish to “glamorize” the actions of Direct Action, they felt that “the issues clearly spoken to by the actions and statements” of the collective “reaffirm[s] our commitment to resistance.”<sup>457</sup> Placing the label of terrorism on Litton Systems and other initiators of social violence, Indirect Action maintained that “we are not willing to stand back and let the state define the direction of and tactics of resistance to the atrocities perpetuated by Capital—and we are not willing to accept that our little ‘guns’ are more dangerous than their big ones.”<sup>458</sup> As a result, Indirect Action shifted the focus on the nature of resistance away from Direct Action’s relationship to popular opposition movements and instead focused on the asymmetrical levels of violence undertaken by the collective, capitalism, and the state. Moreover, the collective reiterated Direct Action’s argument for the need to understand the bombing within the specific political context of the struggle against nuclear weapons. “For years we have been organizing peace coalitions, petitioning, leafleting, lobbying, and demonstrating—and though our numbers have grown, many of us are frustrated by the apparent lack of effect on the power-that-be. From these experiences it is no grand leap to understanding why [Direct Action chose] tactics of a more direct nature.”<sup>459</sup>

Anarchist debate over the use of force helped to re-conceptualize the simple media narrative that emerged in the wake of the Litton bombing, and non-anarchist activists also contributed to the debate over sabotage as a form of resistance. Here, Phillip and Daniel Berrigan, Catholic activists and militant opponents of militarism, were among the most well known and influential. Active in their own campaigns of sabotage against American military infrastructure in the United States throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Berrigan brothers, along with other anti-militarist activists, created the Plowshares movement in 1980. In September of that year, eight activists connected to the group, including the Berrigans, surreptitiously entered a military production facility in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Using hammers, they smashed in the nose cones of two

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<sup>457</sup> Indirect Action, “Regarding ‘Terrorism,’” broadsheet, [1982/3?], Randy Smith Personal Papers.

<sup>458</sup> Indirect Action, “Regarding ‘Terrorism.’”

<sup>459</sup> Indirect Action, “Regarding ‘Terrorism.’”

nuclear warheads before being arrested.<sup>460</sup> Such actions took place within the same anti-nuclear context that nurtured the CMCP north of the border. Indeed, Phillip Berrigan had been a vocal supporter of the CMCP, having traveled to Toronto on various occasions to participate in anti-cruise events.<sup>461</sup>

Although many in the CMCP sought to distance themselves from the Litton bombing by criticizing Direct Action and their choice of tactics, Philip Berrigan articulated a dissenting opinion. He argued that Christian religious teachings supported the idea that private property had no legitimate existence in society, maintaining that the Bible “considers the universe and all its materiality as belonging to the Creator...human beings ‘own’ nothing, have title to nothing.” This rejection of private property sat alongside the more proscriptive biblical teaching that called on the faithful to transform “swords into plowshares,” a theological device that the Berrigans used as a basis for acts of sabotage against military technologies south of the border. In this reading, military technology was a legitimate target for sabotage on two accounts: first as a form of private property, and second as an instrument of social violence.<sup>462</sup>

Berrigan unapologetically occupied a place within the debate over Litton where few other non-anarchist anti-nuclear activists were willing to go. Drawing on his experience in the struggles against the Vietnam War, Berrigan admitted that he had witnessed activists use explosives against military property without injury to people and “thus a point was made against death-dealing property.” In general, however, he suggested avoiding bombs because of their technical unpredictability, the potential for human harm, and the limited ability of the public to “read such an event” as part of a progressive narrative. Still, Berrigan did not directly criticize Direct Action. Instead, it was Litton, not those who resisted it, that qualified as “terrorists.” Direct Action’s attack on Litton was relatively small compared to the violence of the nuclear arms industry. Drawing from Gandhi, Berrigan asserted that while non-violent action was a preferable

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<sup>460</sup> Matt Meyer and Paul Magno, “Hard to Find: Building for Nonviolent Revolution and the Pacifist Underground,” in *The Hidden 1970s*, 250–266.

<sup>461</sup> Cruise Missile Conversion Project, “Press Release Re: Toronto Nuclear Weapons Trial,” correspondence to unspecified recipient, [n.d.], Litton Box 12, Joe Mihevc Personal Papers.

<sup>462</sup> Phil Berrigan, “On Property Damage,” in the Cruise Missile Conversion Project eds., *A Case for Non-Violence Resistance* (Toronto: The Cruise Missile Conversion Project, 1985), 20.

form of resistance, it was better to act violently than to not act at all.<sup>463</sup>

While this was by no means the predominant assessment, it clearly demonstrates that the contours of debate surrounding the Litton bombing were more diverse than the narratives of the mainstream media and some activist organizations might imply. While some anarchists emphasized various levels of support for armed action, others flagrantly opposed the tactic. Moreover, the same division could be found between different non-anarchist anti-nuclear activists. Far from expressing any sort of clear political split between anarchist bombers and peaceful non-anarchists, Direct Action's attack on Litton emphasized the conflicting approaches to anti-nuclear organizing within the anti-cruise missile struggle.

However, nothing demonstrated the complexity of opinions regarding the Litton bombing more than the resulting organization and mobilization of public protest. The CMPC's assumption that the bombing would lead to increased repression of activist groups came to fruition. Speaking to the *Globe and Mail*, the RCMP reported that, in the wake of the Litton bombing, it had begun the process of investigating over 300 political groups, factions, and people of interest.<sup>464</sup> The police failed to mention the specific forms through which this "investigation" took place. In Vancouver, Peterborough, and Toronto, police subjected anarchist and non-anarchist activists to intense police action. However, that police action did not lead to the predicted pacification of activities.

Two months after the bombing took place, with Direct Action still on the loose, the police raided the homes and offices of activist organizations across the country. World Emergency, an anti-militarist organization in Peterborough, was one of the first to be raided. The police confiscated activist materials on disarmament issues and non-violent civil disobedience and arrested one of the groups leading organizers, Ivan Lecouvie. Scooping the activist from a movie theater bathroom hours before the raid on his office, police initially told Lecouvie that they were charging him with attempted murder and the Litton bombing. After hours of interrogation, police released him without charge. The following week, police raided the offices of the CMCP and the Alliance for Non-Violent Action in Toronto. Once again, police confiscated activist materials,

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<sup>463</sup> Joe Mihevic, Phillip Berrigan, and Shelly and Jim Douglas, "Dialogue on Non-Violence and the Litton bombing," *Nuclear Free Press* 16 (Winter 1982/83), 9.

<sup>464</sup> Jock Ferguson, "RCMP aid Litton bomb probe," *Globe and Mail*, 23 October 1982, 5.

including information on the organization's members and supporters, and then used this information to obtain search warrants for certain CMCP members' homes. Three CMCP houses were raided, and the police visited other dwellings informally over a series of days.<sup>465</sup>

Raids on organizations and individuals in both the anarchist and non-anarchist communities continued throughout 1983, even after the arrest of the Direct Action members. In February, police raided four Vancouver-area houses. These homes belonged to activists who were doing legal defence work for the imprisoned members of Direct Action.<sup>466</sup> In June, an anarchist house in Toronto was raided. As in Vancouver, it held activists involved in raising awareness and support for Direct Action's legal defence. The house, located at 67 Cambridge Street, was also home to the prison abolition periodical, *Bulldozer*. As with the raids against World Emergency and the CMCP, the police confiscated activist materials belonging to the Bulldozer Collective and raised the possibility of a number of serious criminal charges against people who were living in the residence. These included seditious libel, the bombing of Litton Systems, and a fire-bombing in Montreal. Nevertheless, police did not lay charges for any of the original offenses included in the search warrant. Instead, the police laid charges of possession of marijuana against four members of the house, charges that stemmed from the police's incidental discovery of the contraband during their search. The police then returned a week later to charge Coleen Crosby, a nurse and midwife who was staying at the Cambridge house, with the provision of illicit abortion services. Police told her that the state would drop these charges if she co-operated with their investigation of the Cambridge house. She refused, and the charges against her were dropped regardless. For activists, the meaning of this police activity was obvious. As with the arrest of Ivan Lecouvie, the police were using spurious allegations in order to intimidate certain activists while also hoping to extract information that they could be used in the state's case against Direct Action.<sup>467</sup>

Individual experiences with this police activity varied. On the one hand, there is little doubt that many found it to be stressful and terrifying. Writing in the pages of *Kick It*

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<sup>465</sup> "Activists face harassment, red baiting," *The Nuclear Free Press* (Winter 1983): 10.

<sup>466</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 461–462.

<sup>467</sup> Randy Smith Person Papers, clippings, Jew Mayseung, "Police raid editor, stifle dissent," *Toronto Clarion* (July–August 1983), n.p.

Over, Brian Burch, an anarchist, pacifist, and Christian who worked with both the CMCP and the IWW, reported that “[p]roblems with sleep, decreased appetites, nightmares and strains in relationships have been noticed among eight people from the CMCP who have been singled out for [police] attention.”<sup>468</sup> At the same time, some activists weathered police repression in ways that entrenched or transformed their commitment to their various political activities. This was particularly true of Jim Campbell, the main force behind the Bulldozer Collective and a resident of the Cambridge Street house. Bulldozer collective members published their experiences with police surveillance as a form of activist counter-surveillance education. In effect, they used their own subjugation under the surveillance state as a way of describing the status of current surveillance practices, while also outlining potential methods of circumscribing their effects on activist organizing.<sup>469</sup>

However, the clearest evidence supporting the notion that the bombing did not seriously constrain activism against the cruise missile was the massive instances of public protests that continued to mark the national political climate over these years. Escalating patterns of protest occurred across the nation in response to the cruise missile debate. These instances of political resistance have formed a major focus of the work of historians such as John Clearwater and Mark Eaton. In their accounts, Clearwater and Eaton have both shown that the relative size of anti-cruise protests increased over the course of 1982 and 1983. For example, in April of 1982, one month after the government’s negotiations with Washington became public knowledge, 2,000 people protested outside Litton systems in Toronto, while 35,000 took to the streets of Vancouver. Two months later, in conjunction with the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament in New York, organizers brought 70,000 people into the streets across the nation in order to protest the cruise missile. By the following April, protests in Toronto and Vancouver had more than doubled from the previous year. Over the course of 22–23 April, 20,000 people demonstrated in Toronto, while estimates in Vancouver put the numbers of protestors between 65,000–100,000. At the end of October, anti-

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<sup>468</sup> Randy Smith Person Papers, clippings, Brian Burch, “The State and the Peace Movement: Harassment by Metro’s Swine,” *Kick It Over* [n.d.], n.p.

<sup>469</sup> “Introduction,” *Bulldozer* (Summer 1983); “Introduction,” *Bulldozer* (Spring 1984) republished in *The Vancouver Five: A Story of Struggle to Protect the Earth: Part 4*, self-published collection of primary materials, [n.d.]. This collection of primary documents, which is divided into four parts, has been made available by the Arm The Spirit collective, and can be viewed online. For *Part 4*, see <http://issuu.com/randalljaykay/docs/thevancouverfivepages113to136>

cruise organizers participated in a global day of action that drew approximately 100,000 people to participate in marches, rallies, and other forms of public protest in Canada.<sup>470</sup>

What has not been addressed, however, is the degree to which Direct Action's attack on Litton Systems affected these national mobilizations. The largest mobilizations against the cruise, those that took place in Toronto and Vancouver in April of 1983 and the large national protests of October 1983, happened six months and twelve months after the bombing took place. If the bombing had the potential to curtail the mobilization of protest, then one would expect to see the size of public protests decrease in the wake of the bombing. Instead, the major protests cited by Clearwater and Eaton increased in size.

This challenged both the hopes of the Direct Action collective and the fears of the advocates of non-violent civil disobedience in different ways. Despite Direct Action's intentions, it is clear that the bombing did not inspire further acts of industrial sabotage. Instead, the main tactics of anti-nuclear opposition continued to be mass forms of public protest, calls for social democratic reform, and community organizing initiatives, including municipal prohibition of nuclear weapons and attempts to convert military technology to civilian use. At the same time, the escalating size of anti-cruise protests conflicts with the assertions made by advocates of non-violent civil disobedience that guerrilla activity would meaningfully subvert popular political activity against the cruise. Neither spreading sabotage, nor curtailing mass political mobilization, the bombing highlighted the politically ambiguous consequences of armed struggle in Canada.

At the same time, Direct Action's bombing of Litton also provides a critical setting from which to address a series of gaps in emerging historiography of anti-nuclear activism, including the activism of the Cruise Missile Conversion Project. While the struggles of the CMCP extends the temporal scope of the historiography on anti-militarism and anti-nuclearism into the late 1970s and early 1980s, it also reconfirms the importance of transnational patterns of activist projects that defined the movements of the long sixties. Furthermore, anti-nuclear and anti-militarist activity at Litton and elsewhere demonstrate once again the important impact of anarchism. From the organization of mass movements, to underground activity, to theoretical and political

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<sup>470</sup> Clearwater, *Just Dummies*, 26–46; Eaton, "Canadians, Nuclear Weapons, and the Cold War Security Dilemma," 249–250.

exchanges on the nature and meaning of violence, anarchist activism, politics, and culture played a vital role in the shaping of postwar anti-nuclear activism in Canada.



## Chapter 6

### Resisting Reel Violence: Anarchism, Feminism, and the Struggle Against Pornography, 1974–1983

In the aftermath of the Litton bombing, Brent Taylor, Ann Hansen, and Juliet Belmas returned to Vancouver, where they soon reunited with Doug Stewart and Gerry Hannah. Although Litton was traumatic, the collective remained committed to the revolutionary underground. They planned additional strikes against energy megaprojects in British Columbia, including a second bombing of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir transmission line. Sabotaging rail infrastructure in the north-east region of BC to contest the provincial coal industry was also on Direct Action's list of potential actions. To resist arctic drilling in the Beaufort Sea, they proposed to destroy Gulf Canada's newest icebreaker, the MV *Terry Fox*, which the company was building in a North Vancouver shipyard. In terms of their anti-militarism, the collective began planning to infiltrate Canadian Forces bases in order to destroy newly acquired CF-18 fighter jets. Such ambitions required a continuation of clandestine living and its illegal infrastructure, including armed robbery. As a result, Direct Action planned to raid an armoured car full of cash.<sup>471</sup>

The police arrested the collective members before they could carry out any of these actions. However, in the time between the October 1982 bombing of Litton Systems and Direct Action's arrest in late January of 1983, Ann Hansen and Juliet Belmas participated in one additional act of sabotage. In late fall, the two activists worked with seven other women in order to attack a local pornography retailer, Red Hot Video. Taking the name the Wimmen's Fire Brigade (WFB), these nine women separated themselves into three groups of three. On the night of 22 November, each of

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<sup>471</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 394, 410–418; Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 26 March 2012, 9 March 2012, 13 March 2012, 6 March 2013.

the three groups took responsibility for burning down a different Red Hot Video outlet in the greater Vancouver area: one in Port-Coquitlam, one in North Vancouver, and one in Surrey. The store in Port Coquitlam was spared when the device used to set the fire malfunctioned, severely burning Hansen's hands and face, but failing to produce a structure fire. The other two fire-bombings were more successful. The North Vancouver store was seriously damaged, while the Red Hot Video in Surrey was incinerated.<sup>472</sup>

The following day, media outlets and activist groups received the following communiqué:

We, the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, claim responsibility for the fire-bombing of three Red Hot Video outlets in the Lower Mainland of B.C. on November 22, 1982. This action is another step towards the destruction of a business that promotes and profits from violence against wimmin and children. Red Hot Video sells tapes that show wimmin and children being tortured, raped and humiliated. We are not the property of men to be used and abused. Red Hot Video is part of a multi-billion dollar pornography industry that teaches men to equate sexuality with violence. Although these tapes violate the Criminal Code of Canada and the B.C. Guidelines on Pornography, all lawful attempts to shut down Red Hot Video have failed because the justice system was created, and is controlled, by rich men to protect their profits and property. As a result, we are left no viable alternative but to change the situation ourselves through illegal means. This is an act of self-defence against hate propaganda!<sup>473</sup>

Unlike the bombing of Litton Systems, where the broader anti-nuclear movement generally distanced itself from the attack, large segments of the feminist movement in British Columbia responded to the Red Hot Video arsons with solidarity and understanding. The day after the attack, the British Columbia Federation of Women (BCFW), an organization of 36 women's liberation groups, issued a statement that read, in part:

While we did not participate in the fire bombings of November 22 1982 in the Lower Mainland, we are in agreement with the frustration and anger of the women who did. We noted and appreciated their efforts to see that no one was hurt. We insist that [Attorney General] Allan Williams take action immediately to prevent rich men profiting from Red Hot Video's hate literature about women and children. The women of BC are being driven

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<sup>472</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 327–335, and 339–346; Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

<sup>473</sup> Wimmin's Fire Brigade, "Wimmin's Fire Brigade Communiqué," (22 November 1982) in Hansen, *Direct Action*, 483.

to desperate acts. The Canadian and BC governments have failed to use the existing laws to defend half the population from the horrors of the pornography industry. Pornography is the theory, Rape is the practice.<sup>474</sup>

The BCFW was not alone. Two days later, the provincial NDP also issued a statement that avoided any mention of the arsons, but decried the existence of institutions such as Red Hot Video, labeling pornography as “hate propaganda” and pressuring the government to take meaningful action on the issue.<sup>475</sup>

This chapter investigates the roots of this solidarity. To do so, it argues that the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade’s attack against Red Hot Video cannot be understood through only the presence of committed anarchist guerrillas such as Hansen and Belmas. Instead, the involvement of seven other women—activists who were never arrested and whose identities remain largely unknown—necessitates placing the WFB’s activities into a broader history of feminist activism during the 1970s and early 1980s. More specifically, it demonstrates that the motives behind the Red Hot Video arsons, as well as the interpretation of those acts by other feminists in the community, emerged in the wake of a global transformation in pornography towards explicit forms of sexualized violence against women. Some feminists, both in Vancouver and elsewhere, argued that the expansion of “hardcore” pornography legitimated and taught women’s oppression while solidifying and extending male power. They suggested that the violence they saw in pornography directly reflected patterns of social violence, including rape, battering, and pedophilia. The failure of the state to effectively respond to these patterns of violence further legitimated and radicalized anti-pornography activism. As a result, this chapter argues that the attacks against Red Hot Video are best understood as part of a broad struggle against systemic forms of patriarchal violence that the state was not taking action to meaningfully address.

This chapter also argues that such activism rested on pre-existing organizational networks, analyses, and tactics against sexism in the media that developed earlier in the 1970s. The actions of the WFB were an extension of aboveground activism that included lobbying and policy reform, legal challenges, and community pressure including pickets,

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<sup>474</sup> British Columbia Federation of Women, “News Release,” 22 November 1982, 1, File 1.25, Box 1, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>475</sup> British Columbia New Democratic Party, “Pornography is Hate Propaganda,” November 1982, File 1.25, Box 1, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

protests, and public education. At the same time, the feminist relationship with pornography was never monolithic. While even the most ardent anti-pornography critics sought to differentiate pornography from erotica and other forms of sexual content, debates over the definition, meaning, and implications of these phenomena contributed to bitter divides between different feminist activists and communities, conflicts that scholars and activists often refer to as the “porn wars.”<sup>476</sup> This chapter does not seek to argue against the significance of these divisions, nor does it attempt to reconcile or solve the tensions between feminist interpretations of pornography. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate how a broad set of activist concerns over sexualized violence contributed to both the organization of the Red Hot Video arsons, and the statements of solidarity expressed by large feminist organizations such as the BCFW. In this sense, feminist engagements with pornography during the late 1970s and early 1980s was shaped by, and contributed to, the dynamic transformation of feminist activism in the wake of the long sixties.

These connections across time can also extend the topical and ideological focus of recent historical writing on feminism in Canada. While a large, interdisciplinary body of literature exists on the development and significance of pornography, there are few histories of anti-pornography activism in Canada during the late 1970s and early 1980s. By exploring the actions of the WFB and other anti-pornography projects, this chapter aims to extend the topical focus of histories of Canadian feminism, histories that, in the context of the post-1960s, have been more attuned to the exploration and intersection of women’s sexual and reproductive health, childcare and motherhood, and waged and unwaged labour.<sup>477</sup> At the same time, the presence of Hansen and Belmas within the

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<sup>476</sup> For a small number of works that review some of the main contours of the feminist debates on pornography, see Nan D. Hunter, “Contextualizing the Sexuality Debates: A Chronology, 1966–2005,” in Nan D. Hunter and Lisa Duggan ed., *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15–28; Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible,”* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Ann Ferguson, “Pleasure, Power, and the Porn Wars,” *The Women’s Review of Books*, 3, no. 8 (May 1986): 11–13; Feona Attwood, “Reading Porn: The Paradigm Shift in Pornography Research,” *Sexualities* 5, no. 1 (2002): 91–105; Karen Ciclitira, “Pornography, Women and Feminism,” *Sexualities* 7, no. 3 (2004): 281–301; Dany Lacombe, *Blue Politics: Pornography and the Law in the Age of Feminism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Carolyn Bronstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976–1986* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Brenda Crossman, *Bad Attitude/s on Trial: Pornography, Feminism, and the Butler Decision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>477</sup> See Christabelle Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-empowerment Text, 1968–1975,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical*

Red Hot Video debate—and the work of other anarchists within the longer history of feminist activism in Vancouver since the mid-1970s—is also useful for reconsidering the ideological boundaries of late twentieth century feminism. While much has been done to explore liberal, radical, socialist, and environmental forms of feminism, its relationship with anarchism has been largely unexamined. This is significant because the two movements did not develop in isolation from each other. As women’s liberationists were developing a wide array of militant feminist activities, struggles against pornography and other forms of media sexism demonstrate that women were also engaging with anarchism. Therefore, a history of feminist action against Red Hot Video enables a broader understanding of how and why some feminists responded to depictions of sexualized violence in popular culture, while also placing that engagement in the corresponding context of anarchism’s resurgence during the 1970s and 1980s.

As with Direct Action’s attacks against BC Hydro and Litton Systems, the spatial scope of anti-pornography activism against Red Hot Video was multilayered. The development, distribution, and sale of pornography was—and still is—a global phenomenon. Most of the films contained within Red Hot Video’s catalogue, as well as the emerging videocassette recorders (VCRs) used by its patrons to view those films, were made outside of Canada. The legal frameworks that sought to condition and shape the distribution and consumption of pornography were at once national, provincial, and municipal in nature. Anti-pornography activists also followed a tripartite division in their

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*History* 23, no. 1 (2006): 89–118; Beth Palmer, “Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages’: Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no. 4 (2011): 637–664; Christabelle Sethna and Steven Hewitt, “Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women’s Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (2009): 463–495; Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880–1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Lisa Pasoli, *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma: A History of British Columbia’s Social Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Sangster, “Radical Ruptures,” 1–21; Meg Luxton, “Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* 48 (Fall 2001): 63–88; and Smith, “An ‘Entirely Different’ Kind of Union,” 23–66. This is not to say that historians of feminism in Canada have considered only these topics. For important works that have explored a breadth of other issues, see Campbell, “Women United Against the War,” 339–346; Nancy Janovicek, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women’s Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Julie Nagam, “Transforming and Grappling with Concepts of Activism and Feminism within Indigenous Women Artists,” *Atlantis* 33, no. 1 (2008): 73–79; Rosanne Deerchild, “Tribal Feminism is a Drum Song,” in *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival*, ed. Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003), 97–105; Lee Maracle, “Red Power Legacies and Lives: An Interview by Scott Rutherford,” in *New World Coming*, 358–367; and Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

geographic focus. Feminist activists organizing against pornography were active locally, nationally, and transnationally. Therefore, while struggles against Red Hot Video were most intense within the greater Vancouver area, where stores clashed with an established and well-organized feminist opposition, the chapter also places this activism into a broader spatial and historical context.

The WFB's sabotage of Red Hot Video, its analysis of sexualized violence, and its critique of state inaction followed a long and politically eclectic history of women's activism in British Columbia. As Becki Ross has illustrated, interwar activists within the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Vancouver Council of Women sought the suppression and censorship of the city's vaudeville and burlesque scenes by mobilizing maternal feminist critiques of the sexual content of those cultural forms.<sup>478</sup> Feminist interventions into the commercialization of sexuality expanded in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminist appropriations of Victorian materialism did not fuel this activism, but rather it resulted from an eclectic array of post-war political, social, and cultural influences. As Ian McKay has noted, these changes included the shifting "feminization" of women's wage labour, the solidification of the welfare state, increased access to contraception, a growing social acceptance of women's equality, as well as an emerging body of radical thought that sought to unsettle, in McKay's words, the "very categories of 'men' and 'women' through which so much conventional experience and practice were—and still are—organized."<sup>479</sup>

New forms of feminism emerged from this wave of social change, often under the banner of "women's liberation." This language of liberation, with its explicit emphasis on gender, marked the New Left's conflicting influence on feminism. On one hand, feminism drew heavily from the New Left's emphasis on participatory democracy and the idea that liberation was both a social and personal process. On the other hand, the needs for a self-identified form of liberation for women emerged from the limitations and failures of New Left movements, particularly the sexism that women often faced as activists and the subjugation of gender and sexuality as worthy categories of political analysis within the student and anti-war movements of the long sixties.<sup>480</sup> Capturing much of this

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<sup>478</sup> Becki Ross, *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 8–9.

<sup>479</sup> McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 192–193.

<sup>480</sup> Marcy Toms, interview with author, 8 February 2012.

dissatisfaction, Judy Bernstein, Peggy Morton, Linda Seese, and Myrna Wood wrote to their colleagues in the Student Union for Peace Action in 1967, stating “it is our contention that until the male chauvinists of the movement understand the concept of liberation in relation to women, the most exploited members of *any* society, they will be voicing political lies.”<sup>481</sup> In this sense, the emergence of women’s liberation in Canada sought to contest longstanding patterns of women’s oppression, as well as their more recent subjugation in the context of the New Left.

Therefore, at the end of the 1960s, women began creating new instances of feminist organizing in order to overturn the social relationships associated with capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy, and to contest the limitations of liberal reformism and New Left misogyny. Between 1968 and 1970, women’s liberation movements took root in cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Regina, and Fredericton, and soon expanded nation-wide. Often starting within the confines of New Left-inspired student movements, their activities quickly outgrew campus boundaries.<sup>482</sup> In the context of Vancouver, feminists active within the student community at SFU moved off campus in response to the 1969 formation of the Vancouver Women’s Caucus (VWC).<sup>483</sup>

As a number of historians have noted, the VWC played an important role in the creation of new feminist initiatives, the most well known being an caravan that traveled from Vancouver to Ottawa to advocate for women’s access to, and personal control over, abortion services.<sup>484</sup> Julia Smith has also shown how the activists within the VWC worked to create innovative instances of feminist activism, such as the Working Women’s Workshop and Working Women’s Association, groups that fostered a growing

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<sup>481</sup> Judy Bernstein, Peggy Morton, Linda Seese, and Myrna Wood, “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers...Listen...” in *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women’s Studies Reader*, ed. Barbara A. Crow (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2000), 95. “Sisters, Brothers, Lovers...Listen...” is widely known as one of the founding theoretical statements of women’s liberation in Canada. See McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 192–193.

<sup>482</sup> McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 198–199.

<sup>483</sup> In 1968, a number of SFU women working within the Students for a Democratic University created the Feminine Action League (FAL), a women’s only organization within the broader student movement. The FAL transformed itself into the Women’s Caucus while on campus, and then reframed itself into the Vancouver Women’s Caucus after setting up shop within the broader community. Marcy Toms, interview with author, 8 February 2012.

<sup>484</sup> See Frances Jane Wasserlein, “‘An Arrow Aimed at the Heart’: The Vancouver Women’s Caucus and the Abortion Campaign, 1969–1971,” (Simon Fraser University, MA thesis, 1990); Sethna and Hewitt, “Clandestine Operations,” 463–495; and Hak, *The Left in British Columbia*, 134–135.

emphasis on workplace organizing through an explicitly socialist-feminist perspective.<sup>485</sup> While Smith's work demonstrates how these changes led to the creation of feminist unions such as the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada, it also points to the broader impact of an emerging socialist-feminist politics. As a range of scholars have noted, socialist-feminism became one of the most prominent and lasting ideological orientations of Canadian feminism from the 1960s to the 1990s.<sup>486</sup>

As pivotal as these activist projects were, the history of feminist activism in the decades after the 1960s expanded well beyond issues surrounding women's waged and unwaged labour. The issue of pornography is a critical example of this. Feminists in British Columbia carried out sustained forms of anti-pornography organizing beginning in 1976 and 1977. This activism emerged out of earlier struggles against sexist representations of women in the media, particularly in the context of advertising. While the advent of campaigns against pornography changed the contours of these previous struggles—particularly in reference to the gendered implications of sexualized violence and state power—important continuities remained between these two forms of feminist organizing. Feminist analyses that emphasized that images of women in popular culture were present in both, be they still images in magazines or billboards, or moving images in films, television broadcasts, or videos. These depictions played an active and ongoing role in legitimating and extending women's oppression and male power in both the present and future. In addition to these shared forms of analysis, legal and illegal forms of resistance shaped the struggle against both sexist advertising and pornography.

One of the earliest feminist organizations that tackled the issue of sexism in the media in British Columbia was the Vancouver Status of Women Council (VSW). Formed in 1971, it was, as Clément notes, one of the largest and most influential feminist organizations in the province. A keen supporter of parliamentary and legal reforms to secure and extend women's rights, it was closely connected to both the provincial New

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<sup>485</sup> Smith, "An 'Entirely Different' Kind of Union," 23–66.

<sup>486</sup> For extended treatments of socialist feminism, see Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*; Roberta Hamilton and Michèle Barrett ed., *The Politics of Diversity: Feminism, Marxism, and Nationalism* (London: Verson, 1986); Linda Briskin, "Socialist Feminism: From the Standpoint of Practice," in *Feminism in Action*, ed. M Patricia Connelly and Pat Armstrong (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1992), 87–114; and McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, 192–210.



Democratic Party and the Human Rights Branch.<sup>487</sup> The VSW attempted to mobilize the power of the state to contest pornography, but it also approached the problem through the logic and tactics of consumer action. The main force behind this work was the VSW's Media Action Group. Through a regular column in the VSW's periodical, *Kinesis*, one of the most prominent feminist periodicals in the country, the Media Action Group reproduced samples of sexist advertisements and called on its readers to respond to them through letter writing and the threat of consumer boycotts.

For example, in May of 1974, *Kinesis* reproduced an advertisement for Benson & Hedges cigarettes, a tobacco product marketed to women. In the ad's foreground stands a pair of women's legs, bare from the thighs down to the feet, the latter wearing a pair of dark high-heels. Only the women's legs and feet are visible to the viewer. In the background, two male construction workers emerge from a hole in the street. Pausing their subterranean labour, they leer at her legs. Connecting the length of the company's cigarettes to the length of women's lower extremities, the ad proclaims that "Like Benson & Hedges...the longer the better."<sup>488</sup> In responding to the ad, VSW and Media Action Group member Karen Richardson noted,

I find this advertisement highly offensive and demeaning to women. In my view women also have a right to some dignity in our society in spite of the heavy pressures that exist which treat women as mindless or sexual objects to be exploited. I find no reason to buy your products until women are represented fairly in your advertising.<sup>489</sup>

Using the feminist press to mobilize support against a specific ad, individual acts of consumer pressure formed the foundation of these Media Action Group campaigns. The looming threat of an escalating boycott and the tarnishing of a product or company's identity operated as the primary tactic in the struggle against sexist advertising.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> Dominique Clément, "'I believe in Human Rights, Not Women's Rights,': Women and the Human Rights State, 1969–1984," *Radical History Review* 101 (2008): 113–114.

<sup>488</sup> "Media Action," *Kinesis* (May 1974): 10.

<sup>489</sup> "Media Action," *Kinesis* (May 1974): 10.

<sup>490</sup> For more examples, see "Media Action," *Kinesis* (September 1974): 10; "Media Action," (November 1974): 14; Karen Richardson, "Media Action," *Kinesis* (March 1975): 6; "Media Action," *Kinesis* (September 1975): 6; "Media Action," *Kinesis* (August 1976): 22; "Media Action," *Kinesis* (November 1976): 22; "Media Coalition Formed," *Kinesis* (November 1977): 5. There were some exceptions to this pattern of consumer activism. In 1976, the VSW lobbied the

Generally comprised of a few short sentences, Media Action Group letters often remained vague on the specific ways in which sexist advertising negatively affected women. In order to provide a more nuanced analysis of these issues, the Media Action Group, as well as other feminist writers, published various articles in *Kinesis* that detailed how various forms of media portrayed women, as well as the personal and social effects of those representations.<sup>491</sup> Drawing on reports from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the Media Action Group argued that the continuous and repetitive nature of media created harmful stereotypes. They argued that ads defined images of passive and mindless women, which reflected a sense of inaction and dependency. In addition, the common claim that ads were derogatory was not made because sexual images were, in themselves, harmful. Rather, the group opposed the ads because they were built around frameworks of desire in which women's desirability as sexual objects to be consumed by men formed the basis of their identity and worth.<sup>492</sup> Therefore, the primary reason why feminists opposed sexist advertisements was because they understood them as legitimating and contributing to unequal distributions of power between men and women.

Beginning in the second half of the 1970s, activists began organizing clandestine attacks against sexist advertisements in Vancouver. Instead of asking companies to change their advertisements, groups of women engaged in direct action to change the ads themselves. For example, in 1977, the Vancouver collective, Women Against Sexist Advertising, attacked fifteen Safeway billboards that displayed ads for women's stockings. In a marketing blunder that many Vancouver feminists saw as reflecting an "appalling lack of imagination," Safeway's ad used the identical image from the Benson & Hedges ad "legs." The only change was the text, which now read "the eyecatchers: Safeway pantyhose."<sup>493</sup> Hitting the ads at night, Women Against Sexist Advertising used spray paint to write "SEXIST" across the large billboards. While the VSW claimed not to

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government to help oppose instances of sexist advertising. See "Media Action," (December 1976): 26.

<sup>491</sup> Eloah F. Giacomelli, "Women in the Mass Media," *Kinesis* (July/August 1974): 12–13; Brenda Austin, "TV Images," *Kinesis* (July/August 1974): 13; Karen Loder, "Media Scanner," *Kinesis* (September 1974): 4; "Images of Women," *Kinesis* (November 1975): 18.

<sup>492</sup> "Media Action," *Kinesis* (July/August 1974): 12. These critiques of the media built upon a decade of similar work that had been at the centre of post-1960s feminism. For example, see Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1963).

<sup>493</sup> "Women Against Sexist Advertising Take Action," *Kinesis* (January 1977): 3.

know who was behind Women Against Sexist Advertising, they said that they “very much admired” the paintings. Other feminists were also complementary, including the BCFW, the radical women’s printing collective, Press Gang, and the alternative media collective, Women in Focus, all of whom publically endorsed the attacks on Safeway’s billboards.<sup>494</sup>

Women Against Sexist Advertising was not the only group of feminists to use graffiti to redress the city’s billboards. The following year, the Vancouver collective Revolting Women modified numerous forms of oppressive public advertising.<sup>495</sup> Like Women Against Sexist Advertising, Revolting Women specialized in graffiti. Targeting another selection of Safeway stocking ads, they transformed one billboard from reading “Step Lively,” to “Step Lively, Stop Sexism.” A Coppertone ad for sun-tan lotion that used a mostly unclothed woman went from reading “Beautiful Tan—Beautiful Skin” to “Beautiful Tan—Beautiful Skin—Ugly Sexism.”<sup>496</sup> Additionally, paint splattered on billboards rendered sexist copy useless, while homemade stickers and felt pens modified smaller advertisements on buses.<sup>497</sup>

Speaking to the anarchist journal *Open Road* in 1979, the Vancouver graffiti artist Really Foney argued that progressives adopted graffiti because it was one of the only accessible forms of public communication that they could afford and control themselves.<sup>498</sup> Likewise, Melanie Conn, who was active in both Revolting Women and the Vancouver Women’s Health Collective, also noted that access to public communication was a key motivation behind feminist graffiti actions against sexist advertising.<sup>499</sup> An article in the Vancouver anarchist periodical *Blackout* repeated this sentiment, noting that the “graffiti guerrillas” of the late 1970s had as much right to public space as did large companies such as Exxon or the Royal Bank of Canada.<sup>500</sup> At the same time, the work of Revolting Women and other feminist groups was different from standard forms of graffiti writing because they positioned their actions as not only a form

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<sup>494</sup> “Actions Speak Louder Than Words,” *Kinesis* (January 1977): 3.

<sup>495</sup> Melanie Conn, interview with author, 18 May 2011.

<sup>496</sup> “Free Speech,” *British Columbia’s Blackout*, 4 (23 June–7 July, 1978): 2.

<sup>497</sup> “This is a billboard—It has no right to offend me!,” *British Columbia’s Blackout*, 23 (19 September–3 October, 1980): 1–2; Melanie Conn, interview with author, 18 May 2011.

<sup>498</sup> G. Zangara, “Paint it Black,” *Open Road* 9 (Spring 1979): 13.

<sup>499</sup> Buckle, “Anarcha-Feminism,” 15.

<sup>500</sup> “This is a billboard,” 1.

of communication, but also an act of sabotage. Changing the appearance of an ad undercut its authority by focusing the attention of the viewer away from the product and towards the words of the graffiti writer. In this way, activists sabotaged the functionality of the ad by transforming its intended consumer message into a feminist text. Since no business could allow these alterations to their property to remain in place, billboard modifications also forced economic concessions from the company through the cleaning or replacement of ads. Therefore, if the political logic of boycotts involved acts of lobbying backed up by individual instances of non-participation, feminist “graffiti guerrillas” expressed a politics of direct action by taking on the authority to change the ads through creative acts of sabotage.

These militant forms of feminist direct action against sexist advertising coalesced with the amalgamation of feminism and anarchism in Vancouver. While the political orientation of Women Against Sexist Advertising is not known, Revolting Women was part of an emerging hybridization of feminism and anarchism that took place in Vancouver and elsewhere during the 1970s. In this sense, the use of graffiti suggested more than a shift in feminist tactics. It also spoke to a much broader set of changes in the political and cultural contours of feminist activism in the city. The resurgence of anarchist activism that took place across the 1970s and into the 1980s was inextricably intertwined with the dynamic changes that were simultaneously taking place within feminism. Such transformations greatly influenced not only the struggle against sexist advertising, but also the growing struggle against pornography. Although the presence of Hansen and Belmas within the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade provided the most visible indication of anarchism’s relationship with feminism in the city, this chapter will first return to the early years of the 1970s in order to explain the amalgamation of anarchism and feminism. In doing so, it not only argues that the making of anarcho-feminism in Vancouver was intimately connected to similar patterns of political hybridization taking place in both Britain and the United States, but also posits that the creation of anarcho-feminist projects in Vancouver provided another critical site for debates over the contours of gendered violence and possibilities of militant resistance.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> Anarchist-feminism, anarcha-feminism, and anarcho-feminism are all used to convey the coming together of anarchism and feminism. For consistency’s sake this dissertation will use the term anarcho-feminism. The exception to this is in instances where the dissertation quotes a source that uses an alternative term.

Beginning in the early years of the 1970s, anarchism and feminism underwent a process of cross-fertilization that resulted in forms of self-conscious political hybridity. One of the earliest projects that helped to create, distribute, and debate the relationship between anarchism and feminism was Chicago's anarcho-feminist newsletter, *Siren*. Established in 1971 in order to help nurture an explicit anarcho-feminist perspective within the women's liberation movement, *Siren* published poetry, short stories, editorial commentary, and letters to the editor on subjects relating to anarchism, feminism, and sexuality, as well as pieces on international anarchist events and news updates. It also facilitated the publishing and dissemination of some of the earliest anarcho-feminist statements and manifestos in North America.<sup>502</sup>

Many of these early writings focused on the idea that anarcho-feminism was ideally suited to create a revolutionary women's movement. For a group of unnamed anarcho-feminists from Chicago, this came from the perspective that anarchist critiques of the state were essential in supplementing and supporting feminism's attack against patriarchy. In this analysis, the women's movement should not waste time attempting to reform the state because such a task was impossible. The state, by its very nature, was a violent and oppressive institution that functioned through the monopolization of power. One could not, the authors alleged, base plans for peace and prosperity upon unequal distributions of power in which government representatives could use their monopolization of the modes of violence against those who did not comply with the will of the state. As a result, anarcho-feminists argued that a revolutionary women's movement must "not mimic, but destroy, all vestiges of the male-dominated power structure, the State itself—with its whole ancient and dismal apparatus of jails, armies, and armed robbery (taxation); with all its murder; with all its grotesque and repressive legislation and military attempts, internal and external, to interfere with people's private lives and freely-chosen co-operative ventures."<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> See *Siren: Newsletter of Anarcho Feminism* (1973).

<sup>503</sup> Although it was originally published in *Siren*, this anonymous piece, entitled "Who We Are: An anarcho-feminist Manifesto," was eventually re-published by Dark Star Press. In doing so, it was combined with another short manifesto, "Blood of the Flower: An Anarcho-Feminist Statement," and published as a single piece. "Blood of the Flower," also originally appeared in the first issue of *Siren*. See "Anarcho-Feminism: Two Statements," in *Quite Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Anthology* (Edinburgh/San Francisco: AK/Dark Star Press, 2002), 15–18.

The idea that feminism and anarchism were ideologically congruent was another pivotal argument of early anarcho-feminist writing. Red Rosia and Black Maria, anarcho-feminists from Cambridge, Massachusetts, emphasized this connection by arguing that anarchism was “the logically consistent expression of feminism.” They based this assertion on their reading of the structure, organization, and politics of women’s liberation movements. Arguing against the way in which large bureaucratized women’s organizations disempowered individual members and narrowed political agendas into single issue campaigns, Rosia and Maria called for the implementation of anarchist modes of organizing within the women’s movement. Here, the authors argued that the work of classical anarchists such as Bakunin and Kropotkin; Russian revolutionaries such as Sofia Perovskaya, who took part in the assassination of Alexander II; the early twentieth century anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman; and contemporary activists such as Bookchin provided an alternative set of theories and historical examples that could merge with the anti-hierarchical practices of many women’s liberation groups.<sup>504</sup>

Nothing better epitomized this sense of connectivity than the relationship between feminist consciousness-raising groups and anarchist affinity groups. Affinity groups were seen as the basic units of anarchist organization. Voluntary and self-organized, they were the nucleus where members came together to explore and define the oppression that they faced and the best collective means to fight that oppression. While feminist consciousness-raising groups often did similar things, the Cambridge anarcho-feminists suggested a re-framing of this process in explicitly anarchist terms. Such a position would give consciousness-groups a strong and consistent theoretical frame from which to name and define their collective oppression, and a means to overcome that oppression in ways that were controlled and directed by the collective.<sup>505</sup>

By the mid-to-late 1970s, a growing chorus of anarcho-feminist writing and political and cultural activity joined these early writings. While *Siren* had folded, new journals in the United States, such as *Anarcha-Feminist Notes*, and *Zero*, based out of England, operated as explicitly anarcho-feminist publications. Likewise, anarchist periodicals such as Vancouver’s *Open Road* published articles, news, and letters about anarcho-feminist topics and analyses. Anarcho-feminist study groups developed across

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<sup>504</sup> Red Rosia and Black Maria, “Blood of the Flower: An Anarcha-Feminist Statement,” 15–17.

<sup>505</sup> Red Rosia and Black Maria, “Blood of the Flower: An Anarcha-Feminist Statement,” 16–17.

Canada and United states in Seattle, Vancouver, Ithaca, and Montreal. As activists involved in community activism, anarcho-feminists were part of a growing number of food co-ops, alternative healthcare clinics, women's shelters, different forms of collective housing, prison abolition movements, ecology, anti-nuclear, and environmental movements, as well as organizing against sexism in the media and pornography.<sup>506</sup>

In this work, anarcho-feminists emphasized the politics and methods of collective organization, structure, and group processes. Building on the arguments set out by Red Rosia and Black Maria, Peggy Kornegger drew on the memory of anarchists in the European labour movement and the Spanish civil war to provide examples of decentralized, voluntary, and non-hierarchical forms of organization. Even more important, however, was Kornegger's and Carol Ehrlich's arguments calling for a more engaged look at how anarchism could re-frame and theorize the work of feminist consciousness-raising groups. Fighting against the stereotype that equated anarchism with chaos, Ehrlich argued that what anarchism opposed was not structure itself, but hierarchical structure or organizational processes that divided people through unequal distributions of power, authority, privilege, or reward. In this sense, Ehrlich argued that a conscious articulation of anarchist approaches to organization would be the best way of keeping the energy, autonomy, and radicalism of small feminist collectives without them being corrupted by unequal power dynamics.<sup>507</sup> To accomplish this, Kornegger emphasized the creation of conscious and formalized processes to maintain direct democracy, education, and a collective responsibility. Across the board, the goal was to flatten the organizational structure of a given collective or affinity group. Groups would rotate tasks and specific positions, share skills, decision making would not be monopolized, information and the resources of the group would be made open to all, and the dedicated allocation of time and space for discussion of group dynamics would ensure that any one person was not accruing a position of superior influence or authority.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Helen Ellenbogen, "Feminism: The Anarchist Impulse Comes Alive," *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 8 and 13; Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

<sup>507</sup> Peggy Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," in *Quiet Rumours*, 27–30, and 30–32; Carol Ehrlich, "Socialism, Anarchism, and Feminism" in *Quiet Rumours*, 58–61.

<sup>508</sup> Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," 30–32.

Vancouver was an important centre for this global hybridization of anarchism and feminism, and the Revolting Women collective was one of its earliest manifestations. With a loose membership, Revolting Women was made up of approximately half a dozen women, many of who had met through the formation of a childcare collective in the mid-1970s. For Jill Bend, a key member of the collective, the primary purpose of Revolting Women was to take the concept of anarcho-feminism and ensure its presence within the broader women's and anarchist movements through education, propaganda, and campaigns based on direct action.<sup>509</sup> On a very basic level, Revolting Women provided a collective space where women could read and discuss anarchist history and politics, and the emerging material focused on the connections between anarchism and feminism.<sup>510</sup> The early statements by Chicago and Cambridge anarcho-feminists, histories of anarchist women such as Emma Goldman, anarcho-feminist commentary on structure and organization, material from anarcho-feminist journals in the United States and England, as well as Korneggar and Ehrlich's essays, were all staple materials for the Revolting Women collective.<sup>511</sup>

In addition to helping its members explore the connections between feminism and anarchism, Revolting Women also sought to share these ideas with other activists. Participating in feminist events, conferences, and meetings, the collective attempted to interject a distinct anarcho-feminist perspective into the wider women's movement.<sup>512</sup> For Revolting Women member Janet Rabinovitch, it was valuable to spend the time engaging in these theoretical debates. While she recognized that many women in the feminist movement had implicit experience with anti-hierarchical politics, often through organizational tools such as consensus building, she felt that it was important to have a conscious and articulate theoretical understanding of why and how participatory structures were important. She also felt that an anarcho-feminist perspective was ideal for situating and explaining these forms of organization.<sup>513</sup> Fellow collective member

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<sup>509</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

<sup>510</sup> "News from Nowhere," *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 6. The "News from Nowhere" section of *Open Road* covered updates and information on the activity of anarchist or anti-authoritarian groups.

<sup>511</sup> "News from Nowhere," *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 6. Melanie Conn, interview with author, 18 May 2011; and Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

<sup>512</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

<sup>513</sup> Lyn Buckle, "Anarcha-Feminism," *Kinesis* (July-August 1978): 13–15.



Melanie Conn agreed, maintaining that it “felt wrong to be using hierarchical structures within the women’s movement. I’d felt for a long time that I didn’t want to vote; that consensus was worth all the time and effort it might take.” While these feelings were potent, they remained politically unfocused. Anarchism took these experiences and tied them together into a connected framework that had a name, a history, and a strong sense of contemporary relevance.<sup>514</sup>

Revolting Women also reproduced their discussion group materials for others to read and study. Through editorial space in *Open Road*, Revolting Women provided bibliographic information on different anarchist, feminist, and anarcha-feminist works, and provided readers with the addresses and contact information for the radical presses and collectives that produced the material. Because *Open Road* was distributed through a broad network of individual subscriptions, radical collectives, squats, and bookstores, Revolting Women also published their own address information in the periodical in order to connect with anarchist women in other parts of the world.<sup>515</sup> Conn, Rabinovitch, and Bend also took articles or essays that appeared in *Open Road* and turned them into individual pamphlets that could be given away at rallies, demonstrations, and events.<sup>516</sup>

In addition to educational work that focused on theoretical connections between feminism and anarchism, some anarcho-feminists were also involved in the issues surrounding women’s armed self-defence. Taking place in the second half of the 1970s, armed self-defence related directly to emerging debates over pornography and sexualized, gender-based violence. As Victoria Law has noted, by the middle years of the 1970s, feminists had “popularized” the notion that women had the right to defend themselves and their families from “outside harm.”<sup>517</sup> In Vancouver, as in other locations, self-defence training was diverse and included everything from assertiveness training to

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<sup>514</sup> Buckle, “Anarcha-Feminism,” 13–15.

<sup>515</sup> “News from Nowhere,” *Open Road* 4 (Fall 1977): 6; “News from Nowhere” *Open Road* 5 (Winter 1977/1978): 6; “News from Nowhere,” *Open Road* 10 (Summer 1979): 12.

<sup>516</sup> Melanie Conn, interview with author, 18 May 2011.

<sup>517</sup> Law’s emphasis on “outside harm” signals her broader conclusions that activists often failed to turn their analyses of violence towards everyday forms of intimate partner abuse, focusing instead on a key number of well-known cases where women were attacked by strangers. See Victoria Law, “Sick of Abuse: Feminist Responses to Sexual Assault, Battering, and Self-Defense,” in *The Hidden 1970s*, 39.

feminist martial arts and street fighting to a familiarity with firearms.<sup>518</sup> Segments of the anarchist community in Vancouver were also exploring weapons training as part of a long-standing leftist engagement with the politics and culture of armed struggle and urban guerrilla activity. As a result, anarcho-feminists such as Jill Bend had two political traditions supporting their turn towards the promotion of women's armed self-defence: feminism's emerging support for armed self-defence, and a broader revolutionary interest in armed struggle and guerrilla action woven within the anarchist resurgence of the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>519</sup> In order to promote self-defence for women, Bend and a number of colleagues republished a Canadian edition of *The Women's Gun Pamphlet*, a well-known primer on handguns that was part technical manual, part feminist manifesto. Bend had first encountered the publication through contacts in Seattle. After updating some of its content into a Canadian context, the group republished it in Vancouver under the title *Arm the Womyn*.<sup>520</sup>

*The Women's Gun Pamphlet/Arm the Womyn* was part of a wide array of leftist manuals seeking to educate readers on the technical details of revolutionary activity, but it also reflected a very specific social issue: male violence against women. From the introductory and concluding editorial commentary, to the small comics that appear throughout the pamphlet's pages, violence against women is the central rationale for an armed female population. The opening sentences make clear that the authors defined themselves as a "group of women who have spent our lives living in danger of attack from men." Taking Betty Friedan's thesis from the *Feminine Mystique* and applying it to women's self-defence, the authors maintained that the "same mystique that keeps us isolated, unconscious, and vulnerable also keeps us unarmed." Arming oneself was therefore as much a process of "gun consciousness raising," as it was a practical form of resisting the physical violence that the authors saw as at the heart of male power.<sup>521</sup> They concluded that in order "for men to maintain a successful oppressive patriarchy,

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<sup>518</sup> Karen Pierce\*, interview with author, 28 February 2011; Dulce Oikawa "Feminist Karate," (May 1977): 4; "Wen Do," *Kinesis* (October 1978): 6.

<sup>519</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012. Not all anarcho-feminists were supportive of the turn towards armed self-defence. Melanie Conn, for instance, rejected the turn towards armed action in general. Melanie Conn, interview with author, 18 May 2011.

<sup>520</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012. When it was republished in Vancouver, the title of the work was changed to *Arm the Women*.

<sup>521</sup> *The Women's Gun Pamphlet: A Primer on Handguns* (n.p.: 1975), 1.

women must be defenceless.”<sup>522</sup> To be armed was simultaneously a form of personal self-defence and a collective endeavour to create an empowered community of women that could undermine and resist the systemic forms of violence central to patriarchal power.<sup>523</sup> In this context, *The Women’s Gun Pamphlet/Arm the Womyn* celebrated women such as Inez Garcia, who shot and killed the man who raped her in Soledad, California in 1974, an action that resulted in her conviction for second-degree murder. For the authors of *The Women’s Gun Pamphlet/Arm the Womyn*, and indeed for many other feminists around the world, Garcia was a hero who stood up for herself and removed another rapist from the world.<sup>524</sup> The promotion of women’s armed self-defence could inform any number of political projects, but it was particularly important in the context of anti-pornography organizing because of close association between pornography and violence against women. When the state proved unable to meaningfully and convincingly address the feminist concern that pornography was actively contributing to violence against women, some activists and their allies supported forms of armed action as a method of self-defence. The growing emphasis on arming women to combat gender-based violence was inseparable from feminism’s engagement with anarchist activism.

In addition to battling against sexism in the media and the growing acceptance of feminist self-defence, the expansion and transformation of pornography in the 1970s and 1980s also shaped the campaign against Red Hot Video. As a disciplinarily diverse group of commentators have noted, a series of social, cultural, legal and technological transformations that took place between the 1950s and the 1970s led to a boom in post-war pornography. Culturally, the growth of pornography has been associated with shifting set of attitudes towards sexuality. The 1960s are often regarded as a period of “sexual revolution,” in which access to reliable oral contraceptives ushered in more progressive approaches to sex and sexuality. As Angus McLaren has argued, however, the period experienced not one “simple liberation, but the emergence and clash of a variety of new sexual scripts.”<sup>525</sup> For example, the political radicalism of the New Left led

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<sup>522</sup> *The Women’s Gun Pamphlet*, 2.

<sup>523</sup> *The Women’s Gun Pamphlet*, 2.

<sup>524</sup> *The Women’s Gun Pamphlet*, 44. For Garcia’s broader impact on the debate over women’s self-defence, see Law, “Sick of Abuse,” 41–43.

<sup>525</sup> Angus McLaren, *Twentieth Century Sexuality: A History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 166–167.

to a broad challenge to the conservative sexual mores of the mid twentieth century, including assertions that sexual liberation was a key facet of social revolution. As Carolyn Bronstein has argued, Freudian Left scholars such as Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich were instrumental in challenging the idea that personal sexual desires “required constant repression for the maintenance of civilized society.” Instead, they suggested that sexual liberation was an essential pillar in the quest for a kind and just world.<sup>526</sup>

Changes in the legal regulation of sexually explicit material also influenced the expansion of pornography in the post-war years. In both the United States and Canada, courts struck down charges of obscenity in a series of cases in the 1950s and 1960s. Although most of these cases involved literary depictions of sex—works such as D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), and the anonymously published *My Secret Life* (1888)—other mediums of sexual representation, including films and magazines, also benefited from the shifting legal terrain.<sup>527</sup> This new legal and cultural environment created, in the words of the criminologist Dany Lacombe, a “glasnost of the erotic.”<sup>528</sup> These changes led to a rapid expansion of both the size and reach of the sexual entertainment industry in the 1960s, across the 1970s, and into the 1980s. The arrival of new sexually explicit publications, including Larry Flynt’s *Hustler* (1974) and Bob Guccione’s *Penthouse* (1977) demonstrated the growing diversity and expanding commercial successes of selling sexual imagery. *Hustler* and *Penthouse* also reflected a shift towards more explicit sexual genres, pornographic forms often referred to as “hardcore.” One of the most important expressions of hardcore was the 1972 film, *Deep Throat*. By incorporating high-quality cinematography, a developed plotline, and explicit sexual content that included oral sex, vaginal penetration, and male ejaculation, pornography scholars such as Bronstein maintain that *Deep Throat* “broke the mould for adult films.” In doing so, it set new standards in both production value and sexual content, while its international

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<sup>526</sup> Carolyn Bronstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976–1986* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press), 26–27.

<sup>527</sup> Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 66–67; Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 155–156.

<sup>528</sup> Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 156.

popularity worked to normalize the consumption of pornography as a “hip” or “chic” form of leisure during the 1970s.<sup>529</sup>

The expansion of the sexual entertainment industry helped to generate a diverse feminist anti-pornography opposition in Canada and the United States. As Bronstein and Lacombe note, feminists situated the expansion of pornography during the second half of the 1970s within a broader set of activist explorations that the radical women’s movement had been developing since the late 1960s. An attempt to recognize, theorize, and contest the omnipresent pattern of violence and oppression that women experienced in their daily lives was at the forefront of these concerns. Here, as Bronstein notes, prominent radical feminists in the United States such as Susan Brownmiller suggested that men learned violence against women through culture. Feminists increasingly viewed pornography as a crucial medium that supported this learning of violence.<sup>530</sup> In doing so, feminist engagements with pornography focused more on the sexualization of gender-based violence than they did the representation of sex itself.

The specific content of hardcore pornography pressed the feminist contestation of pornography and its association with broader patterns of violence. As many scholars of pornography note, hardcore not only focused on more explicit forms of sexual contact, including images of penetration and male ejaculation, which had been absent in pornography in the 1950s and 1960s, but it was also associated with a range of violent themes. *Hustler’s* comic strip, “Chester the Molester,” depicted the repeated kidnaping, manipulating, assaulting, and raping of women and girls, symbolizing to many the overt violence and misogyny of hardcore. The magazine’s June 1978 cover, which featured a woman’s naked body being put through a meat grinder, did nothing to alleviate activists’ concerns over hardcore pornography’s treatment of women.<sup>531</sup> The most prominent and symbolic reflection of pornography’s connection with violence against women was likely the 1975 film, *Snuff*. Produced by the American filmmaker Allen Shackleton, *Snuff* depicts one of the film’s female participants being brutally tortured, killed and disemboweled on camera. Rather than being a gruesome act of fiction, this killing is presented to the viewer as an act of real violence. While these claims of authentic

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<sup>529</sup> Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 74–75.

<sup>530</sup> Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 7–8.

<sup>531</sup> Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 26; Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 154–155.

murder were eventually proven to be a hoax, it enraged feminists across North America and helped to catalyze the growing anti-pornography opposition.<sup>532</sup>

As Bronstein argues, hardcore's sexualization of violence was a critical factor in the development of new American anti-pornography organizations at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, such as Women against Violence against Women (WAVAW), Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPA), and Women Against Pornography (WAP). These movements shaped and encouraged anti-pornography organizing in Canada. Exploring this process of cross-border development, Lacombe highlights the ways in which American initiatives, such as the well-known WAVAW anti-pornography conference in San Francisco in the fall of 1978, encouraged the blossoming of feminist anti-pornography groups across Canada.<sup>533</sup> However, as in other instances of social movement development, Canadian anti-pornography activists did not merely derive their organizations from the American context, but instead developed alongside and in direct conversation with movements south of the border.

Indeed, many Canadians attended the 1978 San Francisco conference, including activists connected to the BCFW, the VSW, Rape Relief, and Women in Focus. According to reports in *Kinesis*, conference organizers explicitly relied on the work of VSW member Debra Lewis, who had spent the previous several years formulating a feminist definition of pornography that hinged on categories of sexualized violence and oppression rather than representations of sex.<sup>534</sup> Lewis's work was not exceptional; it reflected a pattern of anti-pornography opposition in British Columbia that developed over the course of 1976 and 1977, two years before the WAVPM conference in San Francisco. As this chapter will demonstrate, the emerging anti-pornography opposition was directly tied to the earlier patterns of activism against sexism in the media and the expansion of local pornography retailers like Red Hot Video. Therefore, a host of political, cultural, and social developments shaped the struggles against pornography in British Columbia. These developments were local, national, and transnational, and

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<sup>532</sup> Bronstein, *Battling Pornography*, 85–87. For an exploration of the ways in which snuff films have influenced feminist thinking, and the significance of those interpretations on anti-pornography activism, see Lisa Downing, "Snuff and Nonsense: The Discursive Life of a Phantasmatic Archive," in *Porn Archives*, ed., Tim Dean, Steven Ruszczychy and David Squires (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): 249–261.

<sup>533</sup> Lacombe, *Blue Politics*, 28–29.

<sup>534</sup> "Pornography: Developing Our Definition," *Kinesis* (February 1979): 10.

developed over a longer period of time and through a wider set of social movements than has been typically recognized.

One of the earliest public calls to contest pornography in BC came in February of 1976 when VSW member Karen Richardson, an active participant in previous struggles against sexist advertising, raised the issue in *Kinesis*. Describing pornography as “less popular” than struggles over access to abortion, equal pay, the development of women’s studies, and the fight against sexist ads, she maintained that pornography was a crucial feminist issue, and one that ought to earn the attention of activists. In doing so, she rejected the notion that sexual liberation necessitated support for pornography. Nor did she advocate for women’s “equal opportunity in pornography.” Instead, Richardson argued that pornography “turned off” women for two interconnected reasons: first, because it was an industry designed by and for men; and second, because it “dehumanizes, abuses and discards us.” Nothing demonstrated this abuse more than pornography’s sexualization of rape. Implicitly referencing the expansion of hardcore, Richardson contested what she saw as the “chic” status of pornography and maintained that its continual association with rape demonstrated that pornography was ultimately a form of “anti-female propaganda.”<sup>535</sup>

The links between pornography and other forms of gendered oppression expanded in November of 1977 during a series of national protests, rallies, and workshops organized around the theme of violence against women. Initially proposed by the Women Against Rape collective in Nanaimo, the BCFW, as well as by other women’s groups in Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, Saskatoon, Regina, and Edmonton, supported the call for a national day of action around the issue of violence against women. On 5 November, women in Victoria, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Cranbrook, Prince George, and Vancouver initiated a diverse array of events to discuss the history, function, and experience of rape, including guerrilla theatre, informational pickets, motorcades, protests, community meetings, and media interviews.<sup>536</sup> Similar events took place in other parts of the country, with activists arguing that rape was less about sexual gratification and more about exercising power. Others maintained that the government should change the legal definition of rape in order to secure criminal convictions in the

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<sup>535</sup> Karen Richardson, “Porno,” *Kinesis* (February 1976): 6.

<sup>536</sup> Gayla Reid, “Women Against Rape—BC Actions,” *Kinesis* (December 1977): 5; “Violence Against Women: A National Day of Protest,” *Kinesis* (December 1977): 4.

courts. By fighting against these patterns of violence on a daily basis, activists placed a strong emphasis on physical and psychological self-defence, as well as on challenging the cultural and social “stereotypes of men and women that are largely responsible for violence against women.”<sup>537</sup>

As part of this focus on violence, organizers wove discussions of pornography into their analysis of rape and sexualized oppression. In Toronto, twenty women stormed a local theatre to disrupt a screening of *Snuff*.<sup>538</sup> Five months later, feminists from around the country gathered once again to discuss the connections between pornography and sexual violence at the Women In a Violent Society conference in Calgary in April of 1977. Activists collectively viewed examples of violent pornography and then discussed how they might organize against it in their own communities.<sup>539</sup> In the wake of the Calgary conference, anti-pornography organizing continued to expand with the BCFW proposing to initiate law reform projects on the issues of incest and pornography, while *Kinesis* published a lengthy analysis by VSW member Debra Lewis on the definition and proposed regulation of pornography.<sup>540</sup>

Drawing on the work of Canadian and American feminists such as Lorene Clark and Susan Brownmiller, Lewis maintained that feminists needed their own analysis of pornography distinct from those that reflected the political interests of social conservatives and civil libertarians. While social conservatives rejected pornography based on its representation of sexuality, Lewis re-stated the idea that the power dynamics that informed and were reproduced by that sexuality grounded feminist critiques of pornography. Lewis also rejected the libertarian view that pornography ought to be protected under the law in order to guarantee individual rights since it failed to recognize the common feminist argument that that pornography was created by and for men. Lewis maintained that libertarian calls for freedom of speech ignored the “situation

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<sup>537</sup> “Violence Against Women: A National Day of Protest,” *Kinesis* (December 1977): 4.

<sup>538</sup> “Violence Against Women: A National Day of Protest,” *Kinesis* (December 1977): 4.

<sup>539</sup> Jillian Ridington and Gene Errington, “Women in a Violent Society,” *Kinesis* (June 1978): 13.

<sup>540</sup> Ridington and Errington, “Women in a Violent Society,” 13; “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives,” *Kinesis* (October 1978): 11–13.



in which the rights of individual men have been used to oppress women both individually and as a group.”<sup>541</sup>

Rejecting both conservative and libertarian approaches to pornography, Lewis argued that what defined a given sexual representation as pornographic was the presence of content that “portrays women as acceptable objects of violence and degradation, or that which legitimizes sexual contact between adults and children.” Moreover, Lewis and other feminists added to this definition of pornography by suggesting that the ramifications and significance of pornography extended well beyond the borders of that representation. Reflecting the concerns of anti-pornography activists across North America, Lewis argued that pornographic depictions influenced the wider world. Reproducing feminist submissions on pornography sent to the Parliamentary Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, Lewis maintained that a “society which has been inundated with material portraying women as masochistic and undeserving of protection from violence and degradation is bound to produce men who have internalized this image and integrated it into their practical relations with women.”<sup>542</sup> Pornography was, therefore, a legitimate social problem because it taught men that it was acceptable to be violent and coercive towards women and children.

Lewis suggested state regulation as a means to combat the most egregious forms of this pornography. In her political analysis, the state ought to categorize as obscene—and therefore prohibit—material that “displays or condones the actual or implied use of physical force or coercion against another individual,” as well as material that exploits or condones the “sexual activity of children” or “sexual contact between adults and children.”<sup>543</sup> Since the prohibition of sexually explicit material could restrict broader expressions of art and culture, Lewis argued that the state ought to only prohibit clear instances of “physical coercion.”<sup>544</sup> As a result, women would have to use “other tactics” to fight against the escalating presence of the pornography industry.

Following the 1978 WAVPM conference in San Francisco, anti-pornography organizing continued to expand. Activists connected to the BCFW, Rape Relief, and the

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<sup>541</sup> “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives,” 11.

<sup>542</sup> “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives,” 12.

<sup>543</sup> “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives,” 12.

<sup>544</sup> “Pornography: Developing Feminist Perspectives,” 11–13.

VSW held a daylong forum on anti-pornography organizing in Vancouver in February of 1979, and outlined five potential actions that feminists could take to contest the spread of pornography. These tactics included pursuing legal changes, public education, economic action, and two forms of direct action: one targeting the consumers of pornography, and the other aimed at those responsible for the production and distribution of pornography.<sup>545</sup> Later that year, activists formed BC locals of WAVAW. Clearly taking inspiration from their counterparts in the United States, the BC section of WAVAW was also strongly tied to the BCFW, which nurtured its early work.<sup>546</sup>

Like Lewis, WAVAW emphasized that sexist power dynamics rather than sexuality defined pornography and these politics contributed to the general oppression of women in society by legitimating male power and violence.<sup>547</sup> They added to this analysis the argument that pornography ought to be separated from other forms of sexual expression such as erotica. If violence, domination, and unequal power dynamics defined pornography, then WAVAW positioned erotica as reflecting a different set of social relationships. Taking inspiration from Canadian and American feminists such as Myrna Kostash and Audre Lorde, WAVAW argued that women needed to take back their sexuality by redefining the erotic around expressions of love, sensuality, equality, camaraderie, creativity, and harmony.<sup>548</sup> While previous feminist analyses of pornography rigorously worked to decouple sexuality from pornography through a focus on sexism and power, WAVAW's work emphasized an articulation of alternative sexualities and sexual practices.

WAVAW's insistence that legal avenues and policy reforms were a waste of time separated it from feminists such as Debra Lewis and others who promoted state action. Foreshadowing criticisms that the WFB would echo two years later, WAVAW argued that, "as feminists, we have no reason to believe that those in power, the authorities, have anything to gain by legalizing and enforcing the changes we advocate. We would

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<sup>545</sup> "Pornography: Fighting Back," *Kinesis* (March 1979): 17.

<sup>546</sup> "Women Against Violence Against Women," *Kinesis* (August 1979): 2. For more on the expansion of WAVAW into other areas of the province, see "WAVAW group organizes on the Island," *Kinesis* (September/October 1979): 2.

<sup>547</sup> Marion Barling, Mickey McCaffrey, and Suzanne Perreault, "Reclaiming Ourselves: A Feminist Perspective on Pornography," *Kinesis* (June 1980): 7.

<sup>548</sup> Barling, McCaffrey, and Perreault, "Reclaiming Ourselves," 7.

be putting out far too much energy for too few rewards.” Instead, WAVAW called for a program of “direct action” where women would “speak out against pornography; refuse to have it in our homes; use self-defence; demonstrate, leaflet and boycott premises that carry pornographic and ‘erotic’ materials.” WAVAW placed a greater emphasis on local organizing through direct action, protest, and continuing public education, rather than law reform, but it nevertheless shared a wider feminist perspective that pornography out to be contested because it constituted a physical threat to women and children.

It was in this context of political activism that women’s groups in the greater Vancouver area confronted the pornographic retailer, Red Hot Video. Opening a slate of seven stores in February of 1982, it had expanded to twelve stores in the Metro Vancouver region by October of that year, in addition to stores in Victoria, Kelowna, and Prince George. The quick expansion of stores—fifteen in eight months—enraged and galvanized women’s groups across the province.<sup>549</sup> Reflecting the concerns of the wider feminist anti-pornography movement in North America, activists in BC focused on Red Hot Video’s dissemination of films that depicted violence and coercion against women and children. Red Hot Video denied feminist allegations that its films were violent. Speaking to the media, a Red Hot Video manager in Victoria maintained that their catalogue of films did not contain instances of gratuitous violence, while store manager Ted Emery in North Vancouver told CJOR Radio that “there is no rape in our films.”<sup>550</sup> Speaking to the *North Shore News*, Emery argued that Red Hot Video “only sells films of ‘normal sex.’ The line is drawn at anything that seems to be carried out in a normal fashion. Kiddie porn, bestiality, real serious bondage or torture stuff we don’t get into. We don’t want to offend anybody.”<sup>551</sup>

Such claims were unconvincing to anti-pornography activists who acquired films from Red Hot Video in order to judge the content for themselves. Contrary to the pronouncements of pornography merchants, activists continually cited evidence of violence and coercion within the Red Hot Video collection. To document and disseminate their findings, they wrote pornography reviews that summarized in detail the

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<sup>549</sup> Gail Peain, “Video chain expands despite outcry,” *Kinesis* (October 1982): 1.

<sup>550</sup> Peain, “Video chain expands despite outcry,” 1.

<sup>551</sup> Ted Emery, quoted in Women Against Pornography, “A Review of Some Films Available at Red-Hot Video, 965 Marine Drive, N. Vancouver,” 1, File 2.1, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

content of specific films. In one review—based on ten days of viewing pornographic films—WAP summarized the content of six productions. It claimed that Red Hot Video manager, Ted Emery, had personally recommended two of those films, *Taboo* and *Bad Girls*. In reviewing these films, WAP identified what they understood to be clear representations of sexual assault, rape, and coercion. The following engagement with WAP's reviews involves explicit references to sexualized violence. Because so much of the feminist response to Red Hot Video hinged on the content of its films, it is necessary to understand the specific forms of violence that feminists were confronting and resisting.

In their review of *Taboo*, WAP focused on two instances of sexual assault that the film sexualized in different ways. In the first instance, a male employer sexually assaults a female office worker who is in the midst of a telephone conversation with another woman. While the office worker repels her boss, the woman on the other end of the phone is sexually excited by the struggle. Addressing the attacked woman, she asks, "Is he raping you? Did he have his cock out? Oh, that was so exciting!" Taking place later that same night, the office worker fights off a second attempted rape, this time by a teenage boy who, in WAP's assessment, "attacks her, ripping up her clothes to reveal her genitals, and dragging her breasts out of her dress." Sexually aroused after the attack takes place, the woman returns home and has sex with her teenage son, initiating a pattern of "incest" that continues throughout the film.<sup>552</sup>

In reviewing *Bad Girls*, WAP emphasized how the film developed themes of bondage, sadism, and masochism to support male power and female degradation. Here, the plot revolves around four young women who, while on a camping trip, are abducted by members of a "cult" dedicated to the practice of "male chauvinism." The women are taken into a "dungeon, stripped naked, and hung in chains from the ceiling." They are placed under the authority of the cult master who uses sexual punishment in order to teach the women that they must, in WAP's words, "obey men." After one gruesome narration in which a WAP reviewer recounts how a woman is physically beaten with a belt and then forced to perform oral sex on her abuser, the cult leader once again reiterates the patriarchal dictate that, "disobedience will not be tolerated."<sup>553</sup> WAP's

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<sup>552</sup> Women Against Pornography, "A Review of Some Films Available at Red-Hot Video," 1.

<sup>553</sup> Women Against Pornography, "A Review of Some Films Available at Red-Hot Video," 2.

reviews of the remaining four films, chosen at random from the Red Hot Video collection, also hinged on instances of rape and coercion. Of those films reviewed, WAP described the title *Young and Abused* as a horrific series of rapes.<sup>554</sup>

Anti-pornography feminists insisted that they were not alone in interpreting these films as violent. Both the North Shore Women's Centre and WAP published selections from Red Hot Video's *X-Rated Movie Handbook*, which clearly and concisely categorized films based on certain themes, including rape.<sup>555</sup> As the *X-Rated Movie Handbook* noted in its introduction, "rape" was a "standard theme" alongside other core categories such as "lesbian," "threesomes," "anal," and "young girls."<sup>556</sup> Using these industry definitions, WAP alleged that the Red Hot Video in Victoria carried a minimum of thirteen rape films. They also counted within that same collection thirteen "young girls" films, a number of which had qualifiers such as "pubescent" and "unwilling" attached to their descriptions.<sup>557</sup>

The first instances of public action against Red Hot Video occurred in late May 1982, some two months after the stores began appearing in local communities. Activists from the North Shore Women's Centre, Rape Relief, Capilano College, and the Unitarian Church gathered to discuss the proliferation of Red Hot Video and the ramifications of promoting social violence through pornography.<sup>558</sup> North Shore Women's Centre activist Jancis Andrews was central in this organizing, relentlessly writing letters to civil officials on the North Shore, Crown council, and the Attorney General to oppose the expansion of Red Hot Video. Andrews's main argument against Red Hot Video was that its sexually violent materials were illegal. Here, she forcefully maintained that the violent nature of Red Hot Video's films contravened both the provincial government's Guidelines on

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<sup>554</sup> Women Against Pornography, "A Review of Some Films Available at Red-Hot Video," 3–4.

<sup>555</sup> Women Against Pornography, "A Review of Some Films Available at Red-Hot Video," 5; North Shore Women's Centre, "Proliferation of Hardcore Pornography," June 1982, 1-2, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>556</sup> Ann Hansen Collection, Box 2, File 2.3, *Adam Film World Guide: X-Rated Movie Handbook, 1983 Edition*, vol. 1, no. 6 (n.d.), 5. Despite the reference to 1983, the publication was available in 1982.

<sup>557</sup> Women Against Pornography, "A Review of Some Films Available at Red-Hot Video," 5.

<sup>558</sup> "Red Hot Video: Anti-porn Action," Meeting minutes, 30 May 1982, 1-2, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

Pornography, as well as section 159 of the Criminal Code, both of which prohibited sexual material containing instances of explicit violence.<sup>559</sup>

By the early summer, other anti-pornography groups, including WAP, were also pressuring the Attorney General and the Crown to take action against Red Hot Video on the basis of specific films. Initially, the groups had hope that if the state had concrete evidence of sexual violence, meaningful action would take place. The state's admission that some of the video chain's materials crossed the line into prohibited territory supported such optimism. In June, Crown counsel in Victoria informed WAP that *Young and Abused* contravened provincial guidelines on pornography due to its explicit emphasis on violence. Nevertheless, state lawyers soon quashed any hope that such a finding would translate into legal action against Red Hot Video. Instead, they suggested that individual Red Hot Video locations ought to remove the film from their shelves.<sup>560</sup> Elaborating on this decision in a letter to Jancis Andrews, Crown counsel Sean Madigan wrote, "it has been our experience that if we can obtain the cooperation of the merchants involved that the entire incidence of sale is better controlled. Criminal prosecution has not solved the pornography business."<sup>561</sup> Andrews, unwilling to drop the issue, retorted that "prosecution has not solved the larceny, robbery, mugging, and murder business either, but again, prosecutions are not withheld on that account."<sup>562</sup>

To make matters worse, Andrews received word from the Crown that it would not seek the removal of a number of the films that women's groups had turned over the authorities, including *Bad Girls*. Although the government agreed that it contained themes of sexual violence, Crown council staff informed Andrews that, because the acting in *Bad Girls* was of "poor quality," there was little justification for its removal. This came as a surprise to Andrews, who "understood it was not the quality of the acting that was under question, but whether or not the films showed material that contravened the B.C. guidelines."<sup>563</sup> In September, both the North Shore Women's Centre and the Port

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<sup>559</sup> North Shore Women's Centre, "Proliferation of Hardcore Pornography," 1.

<sup>560</sup> "Chronology of Struggle Against R.H.V.," [n.d.], 1, notes, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>561</sup> Sean Madigan (Regional Crown Council) to Jancis Andrews, 15 June 1982, 1, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>562</sup> North Shore Women's Centre, "Proliferation of Hardcore Pornography," June 1982, 1.

<sup>563</sup> Jancis Andrews to D. Celle (District Crown Council), 10 June 1982, 1, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

Coquitlam Women's Centre once again complained that local Red Hot Video outlets were carrying violent films. Police confiscated a number of these tapes in Port Coquitlam, but once again laid no charges.<sup>564</sup>

Continuing throughout the summer and fall of 1982, these patterns of state inaction were extremely frustrating for activists who continued to see promise in legal solutions to pornography and gender-based violence. While not all activists abandoned the hope of state action, by the early fall a growing number of women's groups began to directly act against Red Hot Video through a mixed campaign of public protest, including marches, rallies, and pickets. In September, WAP organized a "Take Back the Night" march in Victoria in which approximately 100 women took to the streets to protest pornography and violence against women. Later in the month, WAP activists organized private viewings of the film *Snuff* for politicians and members of the media. When the film was over, they took the videotape into the street and burned it in front of the media's cameras. WAP activists also organized public screenings and discussions of the controversial National Film Board film, *Not A Love Story: A Film About Pornography*, which had been released the previous year.<sup>565</sup> The BCFW escalated its campaign against pornography in September by creating the Action Committee To Stop Red Hot Video (Action Committee) that organized pickets outside a number of the video store's locations.<sup>566</sup>

With pickets continuing into October and November, and with state officials still unwilling to prosecute offending pornography merchants, activists began to deploy a wide range of direct attacks against the company. In October, Red Hot Video manager Ted Emery complained to Jancis Andrews about a pattern of harassment against Red Hot Video stores. He noted that opponents had targeted their windows with anti-pornography stickers, discharged "stink bombs", and there was a failed—and unclaimed—arson attack against one of the locations in early October. Furthermore, Emery stated that *Blackout* had reported that activists were contemplating a campaign of

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<sup>564</sup> "Chronology of Struggle Against R.H.V.," 2.

<sup>565</sup> "WAP Schedule – Sept/82 to Mar/83," [n.d.], 1, File 2.1, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>566</sup> "Chronology of Struggle Against R.H.V.," 2.

charging long-distance phone calls to Red Hot Video telephone accounts.<sup>567</sup> It is unclear whether or not Emery knew that *Blackout* was a part of the city's anarchist resurgence and a keen supporter of direct action. Nevertheless, he was correct in his allegation. The paper had promoted the idea that long-distance calls could be charged to the video store, although it was careful to remind its readers to avoid being associated with such acts by placing charges from an anonymous location, such as a public payphone.<sup>568</sup>

*Blackout's* comments clearly demonstrated the escalating militancy of the anti-pornography campaign. The anarchist periodical echoed dominant feminist critiques that the video chain was responsible for promoting violence against women through its films. It also castigated the state for being a cumbersome and sexist institution that did little to support the interests of women. The anarchist press used the presence of violence against women and the limitations of reform as a way of making sense of the turn towards militant direct action.<sup>569</sup> At the same time, *Blackout's* implicit support for the telephone action reflected that anarchists were more than simply passive observers in the struggle against Red Hot Video. Rather, they were keen participants in both public and clandestine forms of community organizing. Larry Gambone recalls that some anarchists were uncomfortable with being drawn into a debate that included the censorship of controversial material, but the popular recognition that pornography actively contributed to violence against women was crucial in garnering consistent anarchist support. Anarchists such as Gambone, Bob Sarti, and Scott Parker all noted that their support for the campaign involved a visceral disgust and rejection of sexualized violence.<sup>570</sup> Both in the anarchist press and in interviews with anarchists, such references to films such as *Snuff* epitomized such violence; regardless whether it was real, the film embodied the horrific potential of pornography.<sup>571</sup> As a result, journalists

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<sup>567</sup> Ted Emery to Jancis Andrews, 28 October 1982, 2, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>568</sup> "Red Hot Violence," *British Columbia's Blackout* 69 (22 October–5 November 1982): 1–2. While it is no longer possible to do so, it was previously feasible to charge long-distance phone calls to another number. To do so, one would dial the operator and ask them to change the call to a specific number. Therefore, if one had access to a Red Hot Video phone number, it would have been a simple task for activists to charge calls to the business.

<sup>569</sup> "Red Hot Violence," 1–2.

<sup>570</sup> Larry Gambone, interview with author 9 June 2011; Bob Sarti and Scott Parker, interview with author, 8 June 2011.

<sup>571</sup> "Red Hot Violence," 1.



such as Sarti supported the women's movement's campaign against Red Hot Video through his work with *Blackout* and the *Vancouver Sun*, while activists such as Gambone, who lived in a communal house near the Red Hot Video on Main Street, joined with a mixed gender group of anarchists and communists to picket and harass the store on numerous occasions.<sup>572</sup>

As an anarcho-feminist, Jill Bend was staunchly supportive of the struggles against Red Hot Video. However, unlike Gambone, Sarti, and Parker, she emphasized that one had to understand the militancy of the women's community against Red Hot Video through a longer history of feminist direct action in the city. Not only did Bend connect the struggles against Red Hot Video to previous instances of women's direct action against sexist advertising—including the breaking of windows and graffiti writing—but she also connected this activism to the broader feminist engagement with armed self-defence. In this sense, the actions of women such as Inez Garcia and the debates over arming women as a way of fighting back against patriarchal violence not only inspired Bend, but also had a cumulative effect on the evolution of feminist resistance in Vancouver. As Bend noted in an interview,

These sorts of things, like the gun pamphlet and the debates [over armed action], inspired a more militant current among women and within feminism. And this was of particular importance to anarcha-feminism, which would then lead to women being involved in armed struggle and urban guerrilla actions.<sup>573</sup>

This meant that previous struggles against sexism in the media and the explicit violence of pornography shaped the feminist opposition to pornography, as did a politics and culture of armed action rooted in the overlapping histories of feminism and anarchism.

This overlapping political influence went to the heart of the WFB, which organized its attacks in the midst of the fall offensive against Red Hot Video. Because the identities of only two of the nine women that took part in the action are publically known, the history and motivation of the other seven women remains necessarily vague. Nevertheless, it is clear from Hansen's memoir, as well as from oral history interviews,

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<sup>572</sup> In his correspondence with Jancis Andrews, Ted Emery complained specifically about Sarti's writing against Red Hot Video. See Ted Emery to Jancis Andrews, 28 October 1982, 2, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>573</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 28 February 2012.

that the women reflected a politically diversity that transcended any one social or political affiliation, other than the fact that they all self-identified as women. Coming from a mixture of anarchist, non-anarchist, feminist, and lesbian communities, they shared a commitment to using the tactics of direct action in the wider campaign against Red Hot Video.<sup>574</sup> Whether or not any of the WFB members participated in the public movement against Red Hot Video is unknown. Since they were living underground and being actively pursued by the police, Hansen and Belmas were certainly not involved in the public activism against the video retailer. However, the Direct Action collective, as a whole, was keenly aware of the campaign and followed its development through the media and their few personal contacts with the aboveground world.<sup>575</sup>

Belmas and Hansen got their opportunity to contribute to the Red Hot Video campaign in November. After being asked by a colleague if they wanted to join a collective of women who were planning a direct action against the stores, the two activists jumped at the chance. In mid-November, they met with the other women to plan the details of their attack and to collectively write the WFB's communiqué. Although it was a short document, it concisely captured the militancy of the previous seven months of feminist organizing against pornography in BC, while also echoing a wider range of activist arguments. While the group claimed responsibility for the attacks in the communiqué, its primary purpose was to situate the bombings within the context of pornography's violence and the state's inaction. The WFB reiterated the commonly held argument that pornography was a form of "hate propaganda" that legitimated and instructed sexual violence against women and children.<sup>576</sup> Such an analysis had been at the center of feminist organizing in Vancouver and elsewhere since the mid-1970s, and fit within a broader array of activist projects against rape and other forms of gendered violence.

In emphasizing that Red Hot Video was part of a "multi-billion dollar pornography industry," the communiqué also relied on a well-established feminist argument that pornography was not only a tool for patriarchal control, but also a mechanism for the

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<sup>574</sup> For Hansen's account of the Wimmin's Fire Brigade see, *Direct Action*, 328–340; Ann Hansen, interview with author 8 September 2011; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 26 March 2012.

<sup>575</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 332.

<sup>576</sup> Wimmin's Fire Brigade, "Communiqué," 487.

accumulation of capital.<sup>577</sup> In this sense, the WFB contributed to a pattern of analysis that sought to theorize and explain how capitalism and patriarchy were interdependent. Such comments reflected nearly a decade of organizing against sexist representations of women in the media at the local level, as demonstrated by the work of anarchist and non-anarchist billboard modifications beginning in the late 1970s.

By noting the failure of legal campaigns against Red Hot Video, the communiqué explained such inaction through the gendered structure of the legal system and its subservience to capital. The architecture of the legal system echoed the priorities of pornography merchants in that it was “created, and is controlled, by rich men to protect their profits and property.”<sup>578</sup> While many women’s groups held out faith that the legal system could improve the lives of women, a consistent component within the broad feminist tradition, from anarcho-feminist groups such as Revolting Women to non-anarchists such as WAVAW, had continually emphasized that the gender politics of the judicial system created a significant obstacle to using the courts as an effective tool for feminist projects.

At the same time, the state’s failure to act also provided the political justification for the Red Hot Video arsons to take place. In the absence of state action, organizers were “left no viable alternative but to change the situation ourselves through illegal means.” As a result, the communiqué explained the arsons as an instance of “self-defence.”<sup>579</sup> While this reflected the immediate political dynamics of the Red Hot Video campaign, it also reflected a longer pattern of militancy and direct action developed by both feminist and anarchist activists across the 1970s and into the 1980s. Here, feminist direct actions against sexist advertisements, the advocacy of weapons training and personal self-defence, as well as the broader anarchist engagement with the politics and culture of armed struggle provided an additional foundation of experiences on which anti-pornography struggles could be built. This was certainly true for both Hansen and Belmas, who were both motivated by a diverse set of experiences with armed struggle and clandestine organizing both in Vancouver and abroad. The same could be said about many of the other women who participated in the WFB. Although he was careful to

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<sup>577</sup> Wimmin’s Fire Brigade, “Communiqué,” 487.

<sup>578</sup> Wimmin’s Fire Brigade, “Communiqué,” 487.

<sup>579</sup> Wimmin’s Fire Brigade, “Communiqué,” 487.

avoid identifying individual activists, Brent Taylor was clear that the other members of the group were veterans of the city's activist community, radicals well acquainted with the tactics, ideology, and culture of direct action. As Taylor argued, while the violence of Red Hot Video enabled the formation of the WFB, a "longer history of illegal rebel action and sabotage" also led to the decision to carry out militant instances of feminist direct action. While the analysis and tactics of the WFB were overtly militant, they were hardly exceptional in the sense that they reflected patterns of feminist and anarchist activism that developed over the previous two decades.

If this activist history was critical in shaping the actions of WFB, so too was it fundamental in influencing feminist responses to those attacks. Some activists, particularly Jancis Andrews and others associated with the North Shore Women's Centre, were critical of the attacks. Nevertheless, in a sharply worded letter to the Attorney General, Andrews noted that the aftermath of the action was perhaps even more upsetting as she watched with "great contempt" the "glaring discrepancy in our justice authorities rush to uphold Red Hot Video's right not to be abused, compared with those same authorities reluctance and evasiveness regarding the right of women and children not to be abused."<sup>580</sup> Generally speaking, though, the feminist community in the province abstained from condemning the WFB or articulated positions of understanding and solidarity. As previously mentioned, the BCWF released a statement of sympathy for the then-unknown activists.<sup>581</sup> Arguing that the bombings had helped to reenergize the campaign against Red Hot Video, the BCFW maintained that

[j]udging from the numerous calls and letters that flooded in to Rape Relief and Vancouver Status of Women as well as local newspapers and radio talk shows, there were very few people who voiced strong opposition to the tactic chosen by the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. Hundreds of women and men have called to offer support.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> Ann Hansen Collection, Box 2, File 2.2, Letter from Jancis Andrews to Allan Williams (Attorney General), 27 December 1982, 1-2, File 2.2, Box 2, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>581</sup> Ann Hansen Collection, Box 1, File 1.25, British Columbia Federation of Women, "News Release," 22 November 1982, File 1.25, Box 1, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

<sup>582</sup> British Columbia Federation of Women (BCFW), "Report from B.C.F.W. Action Committee To Stop Red Hot Video," 1, in "Convention," meeting notes, January 1983, File 1.25, Box 1, Ann Hansen Papers, AR543, Anarchist Archives, UVIC.

Consistent with this reception, activists held a rally in downtown Vancouver in which women demonstrated their unabashed support for the WFB. In a flash of comic genius, organizers for the event brought plastic firemen's helmets with them, which they distributed to the crowd. Adorned in these helmets and led by an octogenarian feminist who read the group's communiqué aloud, the crowd collectively and publically embraced the militancy of the WFB.<sup>583</sup>

With the fire-bombings front-page news across the province, anti-pornography activists had an additional platform through which to engage with the issues of sexualized violence and the limits of state regulation. In doing so, activists with the BCFW, WAVAW, Rape Relief, the Port Coquitlam Women's Shelter, and the North Shore Women's Centre practiced solidarity by refusing to allow debates over tactics to divide the women's community, generally refrained from criticizing the WFB in public, and attempting to focus the debate onto the nature of Red Hot Video's material and its connection to violence against women.<sup>584</sup> These patterns of solidarity were never perfect, as Andrews letter to the Attorney General demonstrates, but the result of this coordinated action was an upsurge of anti-pornography organizing throughout the fall and winter of 1982 and 1983. In February of 1983, *Kinesis*, which had abstained from supporting or criticizing the arsons, argued that the bombing, "combined with mounting public pressure against the video porn industry, has sparked unprecedented public debate in the community at large."<sup>585</sup> Another writer for *Kinesis* was more direct in her assessment the following year, arguing that the "illegal nature of the actions was a source of debate amongst some women working against pornography, but most understood that the feminist community in some way benefited from them."<sup>586</sup>

Early in 1983, two months after the WFB attacks, and one month after the province-wide picket against the franchise, the state finally turned on Red Hot Video. On 7 January, the police raided twelve pornography stores across BC, confiscating hundreds of videotapes and charging at least one Red Hot Video store with obscenity.

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<sup>583</sup> Marian Lydbrooke, interview with author, 3 June 2012.

<sup>584</sup> BCFW, "Report from B.C.F.W. Action Committee To Stop Red Hot Video," 2.

<sup>585</sup> Emma Kivisild, "Anti-pornography organizing boosted by police raids," *Kinesis* (February 1983): 1.

<sup>586</sup> Punam Khosla and Patty Gibson, "Vancouver Five: Interview with Ann," *Kinesis* (July/August 1984): 6.

The police also raided the home of Peter Struk, who had been doing much of the work to copy and disseminate the films available in local video stores. Officers found 5,000 recorded and blank videocassettes and twenty-one VCRs. They took the tapes, but left the machines in Struk's possession. In addition to the obscenity charge, a number of Red Hot Video locations in the province bowed to public pressure and closed their doors, while one in Vancouver's West End had its lease cancelled by the property owner. Despite these developments, comprehensive state prosecutions never occurred. A photograph published in the *Vancouver Sun* reflected perhaps the most telling indication about the difficulties of pornography reform. Illustrating the 7 January raids against pornography retailers, the photo showed two officers posing with the confiscated tapes with a pin-up calendar adorning the police station wall in the background.<sup>587</sup>

Ultimately, anti-pornography activists in British Columbia and around the world did not succeed in halting the expansion of violent and sexist pornography. Instead, the scope and availability of those mediums has increased, pushed by new technological and social transformations in the rapidly evolving digital age. Nevertheless, as Jill Bend has argued, the WFB's importance never hinged on the promise of a world free from violent pornography. That task was too vast for any one group of people to achieve. Instead, for radicals in the feminist and anarchist movements of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the significance of the WFB was its ability to inspire self-activity, direct action, and the struggle for social justice. In Bend's words, the actions of the WFB demonstrated that, "we aren't powerless. You don't like something? Take it down!"<sup>588</sup>

For historians, the significance of the WFB lies in its ability to offer a new window into the dynamic development and transformation of feminism and anarchism in wake of the long sixties. Feminist familiarity and support for direct action—a political culture nurtured through anarchist affiliations—merged with a powerful distain for state inaction to create meaningful forms of resistance to gendered violence. While activists and social commentators never reached a consensus on the existence, nature, and significance of pornography's association with violence, there is little doubt that the concern with violence fundamentally shaped the origins of anti-pornography organizing beginning in the late 1970s. Certainly, ideas of patriarchal violence were one of the most important

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<sup>587</sup> The description of the police posing with videotapes and the pin-up calendar was published in *Kinesis*. See Kivisild, "Anti-pornography organizing boosted by police raids," 1.

<sup>588</sup> Jill Bend, interview with author, 22 March 2012.

factors in the organization and interpretation of both the Red Hot Video arsons. Such activism did not, however, emerge in a vacuum. Instead, through pre-existing feminist networks and projects nurtured its development. The work of the Media Action Group, Women Against Sexist Advertising, and the anarcho-feminist collective, Revolting Women, demonstrated that struggles against pornography were analytically and tactically linked to previous struggles against sexism in the media. In addition to changing over time, these movements were also shaped by a diverse, and overlapping number of political geographies, from the regulatory decisions of the provincial state, to the federal nature of criminal code statutes, to the transnational movement of feminist and anarchist activism.

As a result, the history of anti-pornography organizing can tell us much more than the number of merchants activists were able to thwart, laws they were able to influence, or failures they faced. Starting from the known premise that their revolutionary aspirations were unsuccessful, the significance of anti-pornography organizing lies outside the binary of achievement or failure, and within an analysis of political struggle. In this sense, the importance of activist struggles against pornography rests in their ability to tell new stories about the history of feminism, anarchism, and the politically powerful impact that sexualized, gender-based violence had on the transformation of social movement activism in late twentieth century.

## Conclusion

In the fall of 1982, while the collective was preparing for the Red Hot Video attacks, state agents were doing everything within their powers to identify and locate Direct Action. At the end of October, the RCMP received a tip from a reporter in Toronto that the writing in the anarchist periodical *Resistance* seemed very similar to Direct Action's communiqués. Following up on this information, the police linked the journal to a post office box in Vancouver. The name registered to the address, Francis Theresa Doyle, was a close match to the name of a well-known local anarchist, Saphie Francis Doyle.<sup>589</sup> From that point on, the RCMP's Security Service—a domestic intelligence gathering organization that would eventually evolve into the Canadian Security Intelligence Service—the Vancouver Police Department, and the Vancouver Integrated Intelligence Unit, which was made up of both the RCMP and the Vancouver Police Department, kept Doyle under a rigorous system of surveillance.<sup>590</sup> Although Doyle was uninvolved in the Litton or Cheekeye-Dunsmuir bombing, she was a close friend of Doug Stewart and one of the few people who had contact with him after he went underground.<sup>591</sup> By watching Doyle, the police gradually came to identify and then place Stewart, Taylor, Hansen, Hannah, and Belmas under surveillance, as well as other activists with who the collective had contact. Although the police suspected that these activists were involved with Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade, it took the planting of wiretaps in a number of residences and phone booths before the state had

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<sup>589</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 285–287. Hansen gives a first name to Doyle that does not match the information provided by the state during the initial hearing that investigated the admissibility of surveillance evidence against Direct Action. Regardless of what Doyle's real name was, the dissertation will use the name given to her by Hansen.

<sup>590</sup> Voir Dire, 19 October 1983, 4, Randy Smith Personal Papers.

<sup>591</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 294–298.



enough evidence to effectively link Hansen, Taylor, Stewart, Belmas, and Hannah to the bombings and a host of other related offenses.<sup>592</sup>

On 20 January 1983, the police ambushed the five activists on an isolated stretch of highway leading up into the coastal mountains. They were on their way to target practice and were well armed with a cache of pistols, rifles, and shotguns.<sup>593</sup> Posing as a road construction crew, the police stopped traffic and approached the truck full of anarchists. When Hansen, who was driving, rolled down her window to talk to the undercover officer, police pulled her door open and dragged her from the vehicle. Explosions echoed off the mountain slopes as the police fired teargas canisters into the cabin of the truck. A swarm of armed officers poured onto the highway from hidden positions, roughly removing the others from the vehicle. Hansen stared in horror as Juliet Belmas lay motionless on the ground. For several minutes, Hansen feared she was the only one alive and that the police had shot and killed her comrades. After all, death was not an unthinkable outcome for an urban guerrilla.<sup>594</sup>

Although their arrest was violent, no one was seriously injured and police shepherded the five activists away into police custody. While these arrests were taking place, police also raided the collectives' residences across the greater Vancouver area. They found more incriminating evidence, including weapons, leftist literature, false identity documents, and stolen property. In the wake of the arrests and the raids, the five were charged with a long list of offences including conspiracy to rob a Brinks guard, conspiracy to conduct more bombings of the Cheekeye-Dunsmuir line, attacks on aircraft and infrastructure at the military facility in Cold Lake, Alberta, the possession of explosive substances, the arson of three Red Hot Video locations, the possession of stolen and restricted weapons, and various other counts of stolen property.<sup>595</sup> The state would add more charges in the following months, bringing the total to over one hundred, including the bombing of the Litton Systems factory.<sup>596</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Voir Dire, 6. Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

<sup>593</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 3–4.

<sup>594</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 5–7.

<sup>595</sup> Province of British Columbia, Ministry of the Attorney General, Press Release, 21 January 1983, *Trial By Media* (n.p.: privately printed, [1983?]), 12–15, Spartacus Books Archive.

<sup>596</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 466.

The allegations of bombings, arsons, and anarchism captured a significant amount of media attention in Canada, rebranding Direct Action as the Vancouver Five.<sup>597</sup> The court quickly imposed a publication ban that sought to keep the details of the trial out of the press while Crown and defence lawyers engaged with the mounting body of evidence and the potential additional charges that would spring from it. The police, however, worked against the spirit of the ban by holding their own press conference in which they put certain pieces of evidence, including weapons, explosive technologies, and radical propaganda, on display for media cameras. The intent of this media strategy was fairly transparent. Before the alleged substance, origin, and meaning of Direct Action's activity could be debated openly in court, the police attempted to demonstrate that the defendants were dangerous criminals. To support this narrative, the Crown organized the trials of the Five so that the court first heard all of the minor criminal charges associated with the collective's clandestine existence—the possession of illegal weapons, explosive devices, and the conspiracy to commit armed robbery. The purpose of this strategy, as the collective saw it, was to paint the collective members as criminals in the public mind, and only then to move on to the charges related to the sabotage of property, actions that referenced divisive political debates and suggested the group had more nuanced intentions.<sup>598</sup>

The state's narrative and legal strategy put Direct Action into a difficult position. The collective was keen on using their arrest, trial, and possible incarceration as a political platform. However, their ability to do so required their case to proceed to trial, a process that necessitated pleas of not-guilty and legal strategies to fight the state's allegations. The collective members were hardly voiceless during their arrest and trial, but they were unable to speak about the details of the case without incriminating themselves. This made it impossible to effectively contest the narratives told by the Crown, police and mainstream

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<sup>597</sup> Lorne Slotnick, "Five charged in blast at Litton," *Globe and Mail*, 13 April 1983, 1 and 2; "Court Security measures tested for opening of B.C. bomb trial," *Globe and Mail*, 2 September 1983, 9; Ian Mulgrew, "The defiant Squamish Five: Down to earth with a thud," *Globe and Mail*, 19 June 1984, 7; Jeff Sallot, "Terrorism common: Kaplan," *Globe and Mail*, 12 May 1984, 1 and 2; Ian Mulgrew, "Must deter terrorism, court told," *Globe and Mail*, 12 May 1984, 1 and 2; Ann Duncan, "Increased terrorism feared in Canada," *Globe and Mail*, 28 April 1986, A09.

<sup>598</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 466–468; Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013; Ann Hansen, interview with author, 8 September 2011.

media.<sup>599</sup> As a result, the group was unable to explain in any rigorous way the political dynamics, meanings, and issues that structured and informed their armed activities. They were convicted and sentenced to lengthy terms of incarceration.<sup>600</sup> Doug Stewart and Gerry Hannah received ten-year sentences. Brent Taylor and Juliet Belmas were given terms of twenty-two years, while Ann Hansen was sentenced to life in prison. However, as is often the case, none of the members served their full sentence. By 1990, all of the incarcerated members of the Vancouver Five were released from prison.<sup>601</sup>

Direct Action was involved in radical movements, both anarchist and non-anarchist, that continued to develop and change over the closing decades of the twentieth century and into the first decades of the new millennium. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deeply explore this period, it is useful to make two closing observations about the contemporary status of anarchist activism in Vancouver and its relationship to past patterns of radical activity. First, anarchist activism continues to be a critical feature of political life and radical culture in Vancouver. For example, in the summer of 2014, activists in Vancouver organized the third-annual Shout Back! Fest, a multi-day radical festival built around a blend of musical performances, activist workshops, and an anarchist book fair. The workshops and the anarchist book fair provided formal spaces for discussing and organizing some of the most pertinent expressions of social movement activism in the city, including pipeline resistance, prisoner and sex worker solidarity, counter-surveillance projects, radical mental health strategies, indigenous resistance movements, and other projects. But Shout Back!'s political mobilization was not confined to its workshops and discussion groups; instead, the festival's radicalism stretched across its different cultural and social events. Nothing demonstrated this more than Shout Back!'s desire to bring together bands and performers from across Canada and the United States that organizers saw as being marginalized by an independent music scene typically dominated by straight, white men. Framing this project through an

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<sup>599</sup> For Direct Action's critique of the Crown's organization of the charges against them, see "Justice and the Vancouver Five," in *Writings of the Vancouver Five* (Vancouver: Free the Five Defense Group, [1984?]), 1–2. The tensions between speaking and not speaking about their political activity were prominently displayed in a series of interviews conducted between the group and television journalist Margo Harper. See Ann Hansen and Juliet Belmas, interview with Margo Harper, audiocassette recording, 1983; Brent Taylor, interview with Margo Harper, audiocassette recording, 1983; Doug Stewart, interview with Margo Harper, audiocassette recording, 1983, Jill Bend Personal Collection.

<sup>600</sup> Brent Taylor, interview with author, 6 March 2013.

<sup>601</sup> Hansen, *Direct Action*, 466–468.

intentional amalgamation of anarchist, feminist, queer, and anti-capitalist politics, Shout Back! demonstrated that musical performances could be an expression of solidarity, an act of resistance, and a tactic deployed in the service of “gender liberation.”<sup>602</sup>

Just as Shout Back! brought anarchist and non-anarchist social movement activism together in the public realm through collective dialogue and radical culture, anarchists with the Anti-Gentrification Front (AGF) initiated several instances of sabotage in East Vancouver against two of the most pervasive symbols of neoliberal gentrification in the city: swanky restaurants and luxury accommodations. In March 2013, the AGF attacked a newly established pizzeria in the eastside neighbourhood of Commercial Drive, smashing three of its large windows and destroying one of its security cameras. The cameras had been installed partially in response to two previous AGF attacks against the pizzeria. Releasing a communiqué in response to this latest action, the activists argued that, “for all too long now yuppies have been peacefully going about their gourmet dinners, buying up their lucky condos and flaunting their wealth by driving around in expensive cars. We thought it would be a great idea to remind them AGF is still here.”<sup>603</sup> Two months later, the AGF set fire to a nearly completed house in the Commercial Drive area. The activists argued that the arson was a symbolic gesture of resistance against Vancouver’s infamous real-estate industry. “We are tired of seeing our lives and memories being torn down one development at a time,” they maintained. If the ever-increasing rents associated with gentrification were making life in East Vancouver too expensive for working-class people, then the AGF’s fire-bombing was an attempt to turn the tables on Vancouver’s real-estate developers, suggesting that “if you are the cause of gentrification you should never feel safe.”<sup>604</sup> While the AGF and Shout Back! are not the only instances of contemporary anarchist activity in Vancouver, they

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<sup>602</sup> Shout Back!, “Wo/manifesto,” <http://shoutbackfest.tumblr.com/MANIFESTO>. For an overview of Shout Back!’s political workshops, see Shout Back!, “Anarchist Book Fair, 9 August 2014,” <http://shoutbackfest.tumblr.com/bookfair>. For a listing of the bands that were scheduled to play at the festival in 2014, see Shout Back!, “Line Up and Schedule 2014,” <http://shoutbackfest.tumblr.com/2014>.

<sup>603</sup> “Pizzeria allegedly vandalized by Vancouver anti-gentrification group,” *CBC News: British Columbia*, 20 March 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/pizzeria-allegedly-vandalized-by-vancouver-anti-gentrification-group-1.1380369>; Tristen Hopper, “A Bitter Taste of ‘Class War’: Pizza Joint the Latest Target of Vancouver’s Anti-Gentrification ‘Anarchists,’” *National Post*, 22 March 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/a-bitter-taste-of-class-war-vancouver-pizza-joint-the-latest-target-of-anti-gentrification-anarchists>.

<sup>604</sup> Quoted in “Anarchists Claim Responsibility For Torching East Vancouver Home,” *Earth First! Journal*, 16 May 2013.

offer useful reflections of its political and tactical diversity in the opening decades of the twenty-first century.

The second observation to make about the contemporary anarchist presence is that, while it operates in a political environment that is very different from the 1970s and 1980s, it shares many commonalities with the previous generation of anarchist activists. Like the anarchist resurgence of the post-1960s, today's anarchist projects are both locally and transnationally situated. The struggles waged by the AGF are primarily orientated against local expressions of neoliberal gentrification, while the flow of artists and authors from across northern North America to participate in Shout Back! highlights how anarchist projects continue to involve the transnational movement of activists and material culture. Political intersectionality, solidarity, and organizing across different social movements are also critical features of anarchist activism in both the past and present. The inseparable connections between the anarchist and non-anarchist activism during the 1970s and 1980s is mirrored in Shout Back!'s ability to bring together a panoply of the city's radical perspectives. Attempts to organize across different activist traditions also lies at the heart of Vancouver's newest anarchist periodical, *Wreck*. In its inaugural issue in the spring of 2015, the journal argued that the "resurgence" of anarchist organized May Day rallies in Vancouver in recent years has been critical in expressing solidarity with, and maintaining connections across, a wide assortment of contemporary social movements. More than an event for anarchists, *Wreck* defined May Day as a time to "highlight all struggles that matter to us as human beings," such as "pipelines, gentrification, political repression, or queer struggle," issues that are inseparably "intertwined with colonialism and capitalism."<sup>605</sup> Finally, the AGF's recourse to sabotage and clandestine attack, and Shout Back!'s emphasis on public education and radical culture, reflect a long-running pattern of legal and illegal anarchist activity with roots in the countercultural New Left of the long sixties and the anarchist resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s.

Recognizing these continuities across time are critical for understanding radical politics, both past and present. Acknowledging the existence of previous incarnations of anarchist activism can hopefully inspire further investigations of its development and impact on Canadian history. Such investigations are sorely needed given the dearth of

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<sup>605</sup> Anonymous, "Why Care About Anti-Capitalist May Day?," *Wreck* 1 (Spring 2015), 3, <https://wreckpublication.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/wreckedition1final.pdf>.

scholarly attention to anarchist projects and their influence upon the broader contours of radical politics in the twentieth century. As this dissertation has argued, anarchist activism played a crucial role in the development and transformation of political radicalism in the late twentieth century, both in Vancouver and elsewhere. In doing so, it has emphasized the need to see the development of this activism in relation to other political movements, cultures, and traditions. Such movements developed a diverse range of political methods and tactics, both legal and illegal, in the service of revolutionary struggle. Locally situated in the context of Vancouver, a diverse range of regional, national, and transnational geographical contexts inseparably shaped the anarchist resurgence. Uncovering this anarchist history is crucial in broadening historians understanding of the radical left in Canada during the late twentieth century.

An awareness of these past movements is also critically important to understand the political context of the present in Vancouver and around the world. Contemporary activist projects, such as anarchist struggles against neoliberalism in Vancouver, resistance to white supremacy and police violence in the Ferguson and Baltimore, or indigenous activism around the globe—to name just a few—are routinely framed in ways that marginalize and dismiss their perspectives and actions and erase the violence and oppression of capitalism, colonialism, and the state. In the contemporary context, this dissertation takes seriously the role of historical analysis as one tool to counter such erasures in the present, and to move towards progressive political transformation in the future. The political, social, and cultural issues that activists struggle against, and the analyses, tactics, and organizational structures that they use to do so, have not developed from thin air. Instead, they reflect and build on long histories of struggle, which poses a fundamental challenge to simplistic categorizations of political action or dismissals of activist opinions. An understanding of this history is critical for bridging generations of activists and activism, and for genuinely engaging with the diverse perspectives and knowledge of those engaged in political movements. It is also an essential step in recognizing the complexity of past and present dissent. We must make the time and space to take this history seriously if we are committed to dialogue, understanding, and solidarity. Such an approach is not only fundamental for a better understanding of the past, but it also holds crucial strategies for achieving progressive political change.

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## **Interviews**

Merrick Anderson

Jill Bend

Melanie Conn

Bev Davies

Larry Gambone

Brian Goble

Robert Graham

Ann Hansen

Sunday Harrison

Ken Lester

Brooke (Marion) Lydbrooke

Joe Mihevc

Carl Rising-Moore

Karen Pierce

Bob Sarti and Scott Parker

David Spaner

Brent Taylor

Marcy Toms

Alan Zisman

## **Newspapers**



*Anarcha-Feminist Notes*

*British Columbia's Blackout*

*Bulldozer/Prison News Service*

*Cheekeye-Dunsmuir Alliance Newsletter*

*Earth and Fire*

*Fifth Estate*

*Free the Five Newsletter*

*Globe and Mail*

*Kick It Over*

*Kinesis*

*Lasqueti Newsletter*

*Nuclear Free Press*

*Open Road*

*Province*

*Public Enemy*

*Resistance/Guerrilla Notes*

*Siren*

*Snot-Rag*

*Strike!*

*Times Colonist*

*Vacant Lot*

*Vancouver Sun*

*Yellow Journal*

*Youngblood*

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